

WHITE LABOUR AND THE 'SOCIAL DEMOCRATIC'  
MOVEMENT IN THE TRANSVAAL: THE SOUTH  
AFRICAN LABOUR PARTY, THE SOUTH AFRICAN  
TRADES AND LABOUR COUNCIL AND THEIR  
TRADE UNION AFFILIATES, 1930 - 1954.

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The British immigrants brought these traditions with them and you had your good Trade Unionists, men who carried out their obligations to the Union. But here we have a country which is purely agricultural more or less. You have here members of a Race or of a Nation [i.e., the Afrikaners] who have not been industrially developed, who have no tradition of Trade Unionism behind them ... and they are dominated by superior minds. If I may be allowed to say so in many cases they are dominated by the Predikants [clergymen].... The fault is ours for not going among them, not understanding their language, and not educating them up to the Trade Unionist principle and spirit .... As a Union ... we do not find that difficulty, we have not got those experiences, which other Unions have in which political differences and political reflections have made themselves felt [i.e., Afrikaner nationalist factional activity]. But still it is there ... and I generally speak very plainly to them [at branch meetings], and I blame to a great extent our members in not being more tolerant and in not attempting to point out their errors to them.

C.B. Tyler (the general secretary of the Building Workers' Industrial Union), 1940.

## ABSTRACT

The first quarter or so of the present century witnessed violent struggles between white workers and the South African state, and the entrenchment of the job colour bar in the mining industry. The Industrial Conciliation Act of 1924 is generally considered to have dampened the militancy of the white workers by institutionalising the trade unions within a statutory collective bargaining system.

The South African Labour Party served as the junior partner in the famous 'pact' coalition government from 1924. The South African Labour Party split in 1928 and the Party and the white labour movement in general appeared to move off the front stage of the political arena. A considerable amount of literature has appeared on the white labour movement during the first three decades of the present century.

Many authors virtually ignore the white labour movement when analysing the establishment of the present-day National Party (an Afrikaner nationalist party) in 1934 and its eventual victory in the 1948 general election. Yet the white labour movement constituted a major battleground in the Afrikaner nationalists' endeavours to mobilise the Afrikaner workers

behind their banner. The Afrikaner nationalists engaged in a number of campaigns to win the Afrikaner workers to the cause of 'Afrikanerdom' during the thirties, forties and fifties. The Afrikaner nationalists' activities operated at two levels. At the one level the Afrikaner nationalists attempted to wean the Afrikaner workers from ideologies of class and at the other level they endeavoured to establish or to gain control of individual trade unions. While the Afrikaner nationalists succeeded in mobilising a considerable proportion of the Afrikaner workers behind the National Party's banner, they achieved limited success in their attempts to establish or to gain control of individual trade unions.

The limited literature which has appeared on the Afrikaner nationalists' assault on the white labour movement has failed to provide an adequate explanation for the Afrikaner nationalists' limited success in their endeavours to establish or to gain control of trade unions. Furthermore, virtually no literature has appeared on the main organisations of the white labour movement during the thirties, forties and the first half of the fifties - i.e., the South African Labour Party and the South African Trades and Labour Council. Consequently, there is no clear perspective in the general literature of the sociopolitical environment in which the struggles for the support of the Afrikaner workers occurred.

This study will provide a descriptive account of the main organisations of the white labour movement in the Transvaal between 1930 and 1954 - i.e., the South African Labour Party, the South African Trades and Labour Council and their trade union affiliates. More specifically, the study will examine the struggle between the Afrikaner nationalists and the white labour movement for the support of the Afrikaner workers in the Transvaal. The South African Labour Party and the South African Trades and Labour Council drew a large proportion of their support from the Transvaal and the Afrikaner nationalists concentrated their trade union activities on the province.

It will be argued in this study that the literature on the Afrikaner nationalists' campaigns among the workers has tended to ignore two variables which are crucial to any analysis/examination of the white labour movement - i.e., the membership characteristics and the systems of government of trade unions. These two variables will assist us in explaining, firstly, why the Afrikaner nationalists achieved limited success in their attempts to gain control of individual trade unions; and secondly, that there was no real paradox between the National Party's success in mobilising a considerable proportion of the Afrikaner workers behind its banner and the Afrikaner nationalists' limited success in the individual unions. We shall show that while the Afrikaner nationalists achieved limited success in their

endeavours to gain control of individual unions, they not infrequently dominated union branches and won union organising post elections in areas where the National Party enjoyed considerable electoral support. Our examination of the Afrikaner nationalists' assault on the individual trade unions will be largely based on an analysis of five case-studies - i.e., the Amalgamated Society of Woodworkers, the Building Workers' Industrial Union, the Garment Workers' Union, the Johannesburg Municipal Transport Workers' Union and the Mine Workers' Union.

This study will also provide a comprehensive review of the South African Labour Party and the South African Trades and Labour Council. Attention will be focused on the two organisations' roles as defenders of the white labour movement. In other words, we shall examine how successfully the two organisations acted as a bulwark against the Afrikaner nationalists' assault on the labour movement. It will be argued that the two organisations operated relatively successfully in defence of the labour movement during the 1930's, but that they provided little opposition during the 1940's and the first half of the 1950's to the growing threat of christian-national trade unionism and the post-1948 National Party government's assault on the labour movement.

## ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

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I wish to express my gratitude to those who allowed me to interview them. As part of a quid pro quo they remain anonymous.

In conclusion, I wish to thank my supervisor, Professor David Welsh, for his guidance and advice.



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## A.

THE SOUTH AFRICAN TRADES  
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## CHAPTER I

### INTRODUCTION

Afrikaners constituted 54 per cent of the South African white population at the time of Union in 1910 and 57,3 per cent in 1946.<sup>1</sup> The non-white population was essentially excluded from the franchise,<sup>2</sup> and an exclusively Afrikaans party had a good prospect of winning a general election if it succeeded in mobilising all the social classes of the ethnic group behind its banner. Parliamentary elections were determined by means of a single member constituency, first-past-the-post, electoral system.

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1. Newell M. Stultz, The Nationalists in Opposition, 1934-1948, pp. 2, 93.
  2. Black, Coloured and Indian males enjoyed a qualified franchise in the Cape. In 1929, at the height of their influence, non-whites made up 9,2 per cent of the full Union electorate. In 1930 all white adult females were enfranchised, but the qualified non-white franchise remained restricted to non-white males. The blacks were removed from the common voters roll in the mid-1930's and the Coloureds and Indians in the mid-1950's. N.M. Stultz, op.cit., pp. 1-2 footnote 2, p. 7 footnote 1.



N.M. Stultz has reminded us that the principal struggle in parliamentary elections during the first fifty years after Union was between Afrikaner nationalist and conciliation-type parties. Stultz defined a nationalist party as a party which drew its support exclusively from one or the other of the two white language groups and which stressed the traditions and the cultural, economic and other needs of that particular group. A party of conciliation, on the other hand, sought to draw support from both white language groups and accordingly relegated cultural distinctions among whites to a subordinate position and sought to harmonise and reconcile the different interests within the electorate.<sup>1</sup>

The period under review in the thesis witnessed a struggle for the support of the Afrikaner electorate between the United Party (a party of conciliation) and the National Party (an Afrikaner nationalist party). The National Party, which was established in 1934, gradually consolidated its position over the years and, with the support of the small Afrikaner Party, ousted General J. Smuts's United Party from office in the 1948 general election. The National Party/Afrikaner Party alliance, which advocated the doctrine of race apartheid and the virtual destruction of the trade union movement, won a narrow five seat majority in the general election.<sup>2</sup>

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1. N.M. Stultz, *op.cit.*, pp. 1-3.

2. Brian M. Touyz, "White Politics and the Garment Workers' Union, 1930-1953", M.A. dissertation, University of Cape Town, 1979, pp. 73, 76, 204, 213. General J.B. Hertzog established the original National Party in 1914/1915. The National Party 'fused' with General J. Smuts's South African Party in 1934 to form the United Party. Dissidents in the National Party refused to support 'fusion' and established the breakaway National Party. For further information on the split in the National Party see pp. 53-54 below.

Political scientists differ over the importance of a variety of factors which influenced an increasing number of Afrikaners to turn to the National Party over the years. Thus, for instance, Stultz argued that one must not overemphasise the importance of the "eleventh-hour appeal of the doctrine of race 'apartheid'" in mobilising support for the National Party/Afrikaner Party alliance in the 1948 general election.<sup>1</sup> He traced the alliance's victory back to South Africa's historical decision in September 1939 to enter the war on Britain's side. The war issue split the ruling United Party and the Smuts faction of the Party, which favoured South Africa's participation in the war on Britain's side, formed a pro-war coalition government with two small parliamentary parties, the Dominion Party and the South African Labour Party. The Smuts faction's war policy compromised its claim that it was a party of conciliation. The decision to enter the war

released Afrikaners by the tens of thousands from adherence to the United Party that until that moment had been the embodiment of the policy of "conciliation". Even if these desertions were not so numerous as to result in the necessary defeat of the [Smuts faction of the] United Party at the next general election, as would seem to be the case, they did at least eliminate the electoral margin of safety for the government and thereby virtually ensured that Prime Minister Smuts would be beaten whenever the political tide should next turn against him.<sup>2</sup>

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1. N.M. Stultz, *op.cit.*, p.6

2. *Ibid.*, p. 5.

T. Dunbar Moodie, on the other hand, stressed the important role that the Afrikaner "civil religion" played in mobilising support for the National Party. He showed how central events in the Afrikaner's history between the British occupation of the Cape in 1806 and the Rebellie in 1914 were woven together to form a "sacred history" in which God repeatedly revealed to the Afrikaners that they were a chosen people. The "sacred history" constituted a "civil religion" which had an explicit republican eschatology.<sup>1</sup>

It was in the cultural sphere that a consistent ideology firmly based on the civil faith began to be institutionalized in the late 1920's, largely through the efforts of the Afrikaner Broederbond. The major tenets of the civil faith, especially republicanism, gained political import only with the National party schism of 1934. ...until 1938 the major tenets of the civil faith were not overtly accepted by the majority of Afrikaners. With the centenary of her covenant vow with God [the Voortrekker centenary celebrations of 1938] however, civil-religious enthusiasm seized Afrikanerdom. Ordinary Afrikaners were swept wholesale into the mainstream of Christian-National myth and ritual. The civil faith now became a guaranteed effective ideological agency of social, political and economic mobilization.<sup>2</sup>

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1. T. Dunbar Moodie, The Rise of Afrikanerdom : Power, Apartheid, and the Afrikaner Civil Religion.
  2. Ibid., p. XVIII.

A. Hepple's (a prominent public representative of the South African Labour Party between 1943 and 1958) study of the Afrikaner nationalists' campaigns among the white workers clearly assumed that Afrikaner culture, language and religion had a strong inherent appeal for the Afrikaner electorate.<sup>1</sup>

Marxist authors such as R.H. Davies and D. O'Meara de-emphasised the mystic appeal of Afrikaner nationalism and stressed the crucial role that a number of 'economic' factors played in swaying workers to support the Afrikaner nationalists' trade union campaigns and to vote for the National Party.<sup>2</sup> Although the Marxist authors H.J. Simons and R.E. Simons never really come to grips with the question of why workers supported the National Party and the Afrikaner nationalists' trade union campaigns, they appeared to place somewhat more weight than Davies and O'Meara on the inherent appeal of Afrikaner culture, language and religion among the workers.<sup>3</sup>

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1. Alex Hepple, Trade Unions in Travail. The Story of the Broederbond Nationalist Plan to Control South African Trade Unions.
  2. Robert H. Davies, Capital, State and White Labour in South Africa 1900-1960. An Historical Materialist Analysis of Class Formation and Class Relations; Dan O'Meara, "Analysing Afrikaner Nationalism: The 'Christian-National' Assault on White Trade Unionism in South Africa, 1934-1948", in African Affairs, vol. 77 no. 306, January 1978, pp. 45-72; D. O'Meara, "Class, Capital and Ideology in the Development of Afrikaner Nationalism", PhD. dissertation, University of Sussex, 1979. Some of these 'economic' factors are examined at pp. 33-34, 129-130, 153, 293-294 below.
  3. Harold J. Simons and Ray E. Simons, Class and Colour in South Africa 1850-1950.

H. Giliomee, an Afrikaner, briefly touched upon the question of why workers were attracted to the National Party in articles which were primarily concerned with other topics. He suggested that ethnic and class factors played important roles in attracting Afrikaners to the National Party. On the one hand, the National Party's policy of job colour bars, etc., offered the semi-skilled Afrikaner workers "a more extensive protection of their jobs, higher wages, ...." On the other hand, the National Party's promotion of Afrikaner culture and its demands for "South African national independence" appealed to the psychological and status needs of the Afrikaners in general and to the Afrikaner middle class (most notably educators, civil servants and professionals) in particular. He added that "Ethnic mobilisation ... appealed to the status needs of the Afrikaner workers, particularly their sense of racial superiority."<sup>1</sup>

Approximately two-thirds of the new seats that the National Party/Afrikaner Party alliance won in the 1948 general election were in the rural areas of the Cape and the Transvaal. With the notable exception of the Transvaal the alliance made little headway in the urban areas. The alliance won ten new seats in the Witwatersrand and Pretoria areas (i.e., the main urban areas of the Transvaal).<sup>2</sup> The National Party's and the Afrikaner

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1. Hermann Giliomee, "The Growth of Afrikaner Identity", in The Rise and Crisis of Afrikaner Power, eds. Heribert Adam and Hermann Giliomee, p. 115; H. Giliomee, "The Afrikaner Economic Advance", in The Rise and Crisis of Afrikaner Power, op.cit., pp. 155-156, 163, 155-156 (Quotes in text).
  2. B.M. Schoeman, Parlementêre Verkiesings in Suid Afrika, pp.270-300; Kenneth A. Heard, General Elections in South Africa 1943-1970, pp. 38-39.

Party's victories in the Witwatersrand and Pretoria areas reflected the strong support that the alliance had obtained from the Afrikaner workers in the Transvaal. The alliance's success in attracting a considerable proportion of the Afrikaner workers to its banner was preceded by a long, bitter and sometimes violent struggle within the trade union movement.

The Afrikaner nationalists during the 1930's viewed with increasing concern the continued urbanisation of the rural Afrikaners and the enrolment of a considerable number of these Afrikaners into class conscious trade unions. Furthermore, a significant number of the Afrikaner workers on the Witwatersrand during the mid-1930's began to show an unhealthy inclination for the Anglophone-dominated South African Labour Party.

The Afrikaner nationalists viewed the Anglophone-dominated white labour movement in general and trade unions such as the Garment Workers' Union in particular as demonic organisations which were causing the 'denationalisation' of the Afrikaner workers by attracting them to ideologies of class. Thus, for example, Dr. H.P. Wolmarans (a lecturer in theology at the University of Pretoria) attacked, inter alia, the Garment Workers' Union in a lengthy pamphlet which was published in 1938:

The girls-Garment Workers' Union, which on the Witwatersrand alone has over 6000 members, is affiliated to the [South African] Trades and Labour Council, an organisation which has already done considerable communist propaganda work in South Africa and from whom, among other things, the initiative came for the establishment of the People's Front. The Garment Workers' Union was very strongly represented at the inaugural conference of the communist People's Front, [the Union's delegates included] girls with distinctly Afrikaans names. The secretary of the Garment Workers' Union is the communist Jew E.S. Sachs who is also a member of the Trades and Labour Council and he gives weekly lessons in his office on the principles and methods of communism. ... Sachs was elected as secretary at the beginning of 1936 for a three year term of office by a small group of girls. The other thousands knew nothing about [the election] .... Each girl who works in a factory is obliged to be a member of the Union and must pay six pennies per week or £1 6s. per year to the Union .... The secretary gets a fat wage ... to save the Afrikaner girls ... [and] part of the salary of the native secretary of the native clothing workers' union comes from the Union's funds. And what of the rest [of the Union's funds] ? Who can doubt that it is not used for communist propaganda. [My translation.]

The prospect of the 'denationalisation' of the Afrikaner worker posed a serious threat to the future of 'Afrikanerdom'. Thus, for instance, Dr. A. Hertzog, a prominent Afrikaner nationalist activist, informed a public meeting in Bloemfontein in 1937

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1. H.P. Wolmarans, Kommunisme en die Suid Afrikaanse Vakunies, pp. 43-44. The pamphlet contained numerous other allegations against E.S. Sachs and Dr. H.P. Wolmarans subsequently paid him three hundred pounds in an out of court settlement for libel. The Garment Worker/Die Klerewerker, January/February 1942.

that the continued urbanisation of the white population had resulted in two-thirds of the whites being resident in the urban areas. He added that

If we wish to ensure that there is hope for the future of the Afrikaner, then we must capture ["inneem"] the cities. If we wish to succeed in this task, then we must win the workers [to our cause].<sup>1</sup> [My translation.]

According to O'Meara, the National Party, which was established in 1934, initially enjoyed very little support among the urban workers and farmers in the northern provinces (i.e., the Transvaal and the Orange Free State). The National Party initially drew its support in the northern provinces mainly from members of the petty bourgeoisie who, for various reasons, had seen their 'economic' position either undermined or increasingly threatened over the years. The Afrikaner nationalists' ideology and activities in the northern provinces after the mid-1930's reflected the economic needs and class interests of the Afrikaner petty bourgeoisie. In contrast to his argument in an earlier article, O'Meara stated in his doctoral dissertation that the Afrikaner nationalist petty bourgeoisie sincerely believed that their policies and activities would lead to the economic salvation of ALL the social classes of the Afrikaner ethnic group.<sup>2</sup>

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1. Dr. A. Hertzog quoted in B.M. Touyz, op.cit., p. I.
  2. D. O'Meara, "Assault on White Trade Unionism in S.A.", op.cit.; D. O'Meara, "Class, Capital and Ideology in the Development of Afrikaner Nationalism", op.cit. By petty bourgeoisie O'Meara meant the small traders and manufacturers, civil servants, lawyers, clergymen, academics, etc.



O'Meara stated that Marx's comments on French petty bourgeois democrats applied equally to the petty bourgeois Afrikaner nationalists:

But the democrat, because he represents the petty bourgeoisie, that is a transition class in which the interests of two classes [bourgeoisie and proletariat] are simultaneously mutually blunted, imagines himself elevated above class antagonisms generally. Though democrats concede that a privileged class confronts them, but they, along with the rest of the nation form the people. What they represent is the people's rights; what interests them is the people's interests. Accordingly when a struggle is impending they do not need to examine the interests and positions of the different classes .... They have merely to give the signal, and the people, with all its inexhaustible resources will fall upon the oppressors.<sup>1</sup>

O'Meara identified the Afrikaner nationalists who initiated the organisational activities/campaigns among the Afrikaner workers during the 1930's as members of petty bourgeois organisations (e.g., the Afrikaner-Broederbond and the National Party in the Transvaal). O'Meara stated that the mobilisation of the Afrikaner workers was important for two reasons. Firstly, the numerically-strong Afrikaner workers could provide a mass support base for the National Party in the northern provinces;

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1. The Eighteenth Brumaire of Louis Bonaparte, MESW, p. 122, quoted in D. O'Meara, "Class, Capital and Ideology in the Development of Afrikaner Nationalism", op.cit., pp. 190-191.

and secondly, if the Afrikaner workers' savings, etc., were channelled into Afrikaner institutions, the funds could be used to finance the development of Afrikaner businesses.<sup>1</sup>

The Afrikaner nationalists became involved in trade union activity during the early 1930's and launched their trade union campaign in the mid-1930's. They propagated a new form of trade unionism which they labelled christian-nationalist and attempted to mobilise the Afrikaner workers on ethnic lines. The Afrikaner nationalists' assault on the white trade union movement operated at two levels. At the one level the Afrikaner nationalists attempted to wean the workers from ideologies of class and at the other level they endeavoured to establish or to gain control of trade unions. The Afrikaner nationalists were largely concerned with weaning the Afrikaner workers from ideologies of class and winning them to the cause of 'Afrikanerdom'. Needless to say, their endeavours to mobilise the Afrikaner workers on ethnic lines also weakened the United Party's appeals for unity between the two white language groups.

The Afrikaner nationalists, who focused their attention on the Afrikaner workers in the Transvaal, achieved limited success in their attempts to establish and to gain control of trade unions. Their most notable successes were the establishment of an industrial union on the railways in

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1. D.O'Meara, "Assault on White Trade Unionism in S.A.", op.cit., pp. 46-47, 52-55.

late 1933 and their victory in the Mine Workers' Union election in late 1948. On the other hand, the Afrikaner nationalists were unsuccessful in their attempts to gain control of numerous trade unions such as the Building Workers' Industrial Union and the Garment Workers' Union.

Political scientists differ over the importance of the Afrikaner nationalists' campaigns among the workers during the thirties, forties and fifties. On the one hand, Stultz ignored the issue in his analysis of the factors which influenced the outcome of the 1948 general election and Dunbar Moodie cautioned against exaggerating the importance of the role which "Afrikaner racist associations of workers" played in mobilising the workers behind the National Party/Afrikaner Party alliance's banner.<sup>1</sup> On the other hand, Davies, Hepple and O'Meara stressed the important role that the Afrikaner nationalists' trade union activities in general played in winning the workers to the National Party.<sup>2</sup>

A limited amount of literature has appeared on the Afrikaner nationalists' assault on the trade union movement. Hepple and O'Meara examined the Afrikaner nationalists' assault on the trade union movement in general while L. Naudé and B.M. Touyz analysed the Afrikaner nationalists' struggles

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1. N.M. Stultz, *op.cit.*, *passim*; T. Dunbar Moodie, *op.cit.*, p. 255.

2. R.H. Davies, *op.cit.*, pp. 281-330; A. Hepple, *op.cit.*; D. O'Meara, "Assault on White Trade Unionism in S.A.", *op.cit.*, *passim*.

to gain control of the Mine Workers' Union and the Garment Workers' Union respectively.<sup>1</sup> Although their studies were not primarily concerned with the issue, Davies and the Simonses discussed the Afrikaner nationalists' campaigns among the workers at some length.<sup>2</sup> E.S. Sachs's (the general secretary of the Garment Workers' Union, 1928-1952) two books contain many references to the Afrikaner nationalists' campaign against the Garment Workers' Union.<sup>3</sup> Davies's, Hepple's, O'Meara's and the Simonses' studies of the Afrikaner nationalists' campaigns against individual trade unions are based on superficial research and their analyses of the struggles in the individual trade unions are marred by a number of factual errors/omissions.<sup>4</sup>

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1. A. Hepple, op.cit.; D. O'Meara, "Assault on White Trade Unionism in S.A.", op.cit.; D. O'Meara, "Class, Capital and Ideology in the Development of Afrikaner Nationalism", op.cit., pp. 77-83, 178-188, 285-288, 306-317; B.M. Touyz, op.cit., passim; L. Naudé, Dr. A. Hertzog, Die Nasionale Party en die Mynwerkers.
  2. R.H. Davies, op.cit.; H.J. Simons and R.E. Simons, op.cit., pp. 470-471, 518-526, 562-568, 589.
  3. Emil S. Sachs, The Choice before South Africa; E.S. Sachs, Rebels Daughters.
  4. R.H. Davies, op.cit.; A. Hepple, op.cit.; D. O'Meara, "Assault on White Trade Unionism in S.A.", op.cit.; H.J. Simons and R.E. Simons, op.cit. A number of other works have touched upon the Afrikaner nationalists' assault on the trade union movement. See, for example, Ivan L. Walker and Ben Weinbren, Two Thousand Casualties, A History of the Trade Unions and the Labour Movement in the Union of South Africa, pp. 216-229, and Laurence Salomon, Socio-Economic Aspects of South African History 1870-1962, PhD. dissertation, Boston University, 1962, pp. 155-166.

O'Meara, who tended to squeeze events and his conclusions into inaccurate time sequences, is the only author who has attempted to devise a theoretical framework to explain why the Afrikaner nationalists achieved limited success in their attempts to gain control of trade unions. O'Meara's crude theoretical framework, which relies heavily on the struggles in the Garment Workers' Union and the Mine Workers' Union, is largely based on two broad economic themes.<sup>1</sup>

Firstly, O'Meara argued that the nature of the workers' occupations and the internal contradictions within the labour processes of individual industries were of crucial importance. While O'Meara never really comes to grips with the main features of this theme, he implied that the supervisor/manual worker division was one of the important factors which contributed to an understanding of the Afrikaner nationalists' successes and failures to gain control of trade unions. He pointed out that the members of the Mine Workers' Union were basically supervisors of black miners who performed the actual manual work while the Garment Workers' Union's members were generally employed as semi-skilled machine operators. The Mine Workers' Union's members shared no common economic interests with the black miners and an antagonistic relationship existed between the white and black miners. These structural contradictions

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1. D. O'Meara, "Assault on White Trade Unionism in S.A.", op.cit.

did not exist in the clothing manufacturing industry as both the white and non-white garment workers performed manual work. It will be remembered that the Afrikaner nationalists gained control of the Mine Workers' Union but were never able to oust the Garment Workers' Union's leadership from office and it is clear that O'Meara considered supervisors in general as being a stratum of workers who were strongly receptive to christian-national trade union ideology.<sup>1</sup> However, as the summary in this thesis will show, my case-study of the Garment Workers' Union suggests that the supervisor/manual worker division is of little utility in any explanation for the Afrikaner nationalists' successes and failures in the individual unions.<sup>2</sup>

Secondly, O'Meara referred to the character of the various union leaderships and to their ability to care for the economic needs of their members. He noted that the Garment Workers' Union's leadership obtained substantial economic benefits for its members while the Mine Workers' Union's leadership rigged elections, was corrupt and authoritarian, and displayed little interest in the welfare of its members.<sup>3</sup> The importance of a trade union's activity on the economic front is self-evident and, indeed, all the authors who have written on the Afrikaner nationalists' assault on the trade union movement either stated

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1. Ibid., p. 46 footnote 3, pp. 64-70.

2. B.M. Touyz, op.cit.

3. D. O'Meara, "Assault on White Trade Unionism in S.A.", op.cit., pp. 64-70.

or at least implied that a trade union's ability to care for the economic needs of its members was an important variable in any explanation for the Afrikaner nationalists' successes and failures in the individual unions.<sup>1</sup>

Davies failed to come to grips with the question why the Afrikaner nationalists achieved limited success in their attempts to gain control of trade unions. This was a serious omission in view of the fact that his general analysis of the trade union movement indicated that the bureaucratic character of the country's trade unions made the unions vulnerable to the activities of the Afrikaner nationalist trade union activists. He claimed that the trade unions had acquired their bureaucratic character mainly through their participation in the institutionalised collective bargaining machinery - most notably the machinery created in terms of the Industrial Conciliation Act of 1924 as amended. He stated that the question of bureaucratisation was not simply related to the size of an organisation and argued that the unions' participation in the collective bargaining machinery resulted in the emergence of hierarchical structures within the individual unions. The salaried officials became preoccupied with their activities within the institutionalised collective bargaining machinery and became isolated from their general members. In addition,

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1. R.H. Davies, *op.cit.*; A. Hepple, *op.cit.*; L. Naudé, *op.cit.*; H.J. Simons and R.E. Simons, *op.cit.*; B.M. Touyz, *op.cit.*

the institutionalisation of the trade unions caused widespread apathy among the general members. Consequently, the leaderships of the individual trade unions became vulnerable to the activities of the Afrikaner nationalist trade union activists.<sup>1</sup>

The only trade unions Davies examined in any detail were the Mine Workers' Union and the Spoorbond (the christian-national trade union on the railways). He noted that the bureaucratic character of the Mine Workers' Union and the National Union of Railway and Harbour Servants facilitated the Afrikaner nationalists in mobilising opposition to the incumbent Mine Workers' Union leadership and in attracting the Afrikaner workers to the Spoorbond's banner. Contrary to what may be assumed from Davies's study, the National Union of Railway and Harbour Servants was only one of several railway workers' unions in existence at the time of the Spoorbond's establishment in late 1933. Davies also mentioned that the Mine Workers' Union leadership, inter alia, manipulated the Union's constitution and rigged elections in its endeavours to turn back the challenge of the Afrikaner nationalists.<sup>2</sup>

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1. R.H. Davies, op.cit., pp. 194-199, 270-271, 284-285;  
See also R.H. Davies, "The Class Character of South Africa's Industrial Conciliation Legislation", in South African Labour Bulletin, vol. 2 no. 6, January 1976, pp. 15-17.
  2. R.H. Davies, Capital, State and White Labour in S.A. 1900-1960, op.cit., pp. 284-287, 298-302, 318.



The Simonses, who failed to link the question to the Afrikaner nationalists' assault on the trade union movement, indicated that the country's trade unions had a pronounced bureaucratic character during the thirties and forties.<sup>1</sup> D.E. Kaplan cited Davies as his authority when he stated that South Africa's trade unions had acquired their bureaucratic character mainly through their participation in the institutionalised collective bargaining machinery and that the "extreme bureaucratisation" of the trade unions assisted the Afrikaner nationalists in their endeavours to establish a support base among the Afrikaner workers.<sup>2</sup>

There can be little doubt that a trade union's participation in the institutionalised collective bargaining machinery created a structural tendency towards the further bureaucratisation of the organisation. However, there is no hard evidence to support Davies's claim that the bureaucratisation of the trade unions should be traced MAINLY to their participation in the institutionalised collective bargaining machinery. Davies mystified the whole question by ignoring the general debate on trade union democracy and by failing even to make passing reference to Robert Michels's Iron Law of Oligarchy.

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1. H.J. Simons and R.E. Simons, op.cit., pp. 333-334.

2. David E. Kaplan, "Class Conflict, Capital Accumulation and the State: An Historical Analysis of the State in Twentieth Century South Africa", PhD. dissertation, University of Sussex, December 1977, pp. 173-174.

Finally, it should be noted that there is no hard evidence that the country's trade unions during the thirties and forties were as bureaucratic as Davies and the Simonses suggest.

The general literature on trade unionism uses the term "trade union government" to refer collectively to structures such as trade union branches, district committees, annual conferences, leaderships and electoral systems. With the exception of Naudé's and Touyz's case-studies, the literature on the Afrikaner nationalists' assault on the trade union movement virtually ignored the question of trade union government (Davies's, O'Meara's, and the Simonses' limited comments have been largely noted above). Furthermore, while Naudé and Touyz paid considerable attention to the system of government of the Mine Workers' Union and the Garment Workers' Union respectively, the two authors failed to review the systems of government of the country's trade unions in general.<sup>1</sup>

This was a serious omission in view of the various forms of trade union government in the country during the thirties, forties and fifties. Thus, for example, a reader of Naudé's case-study could easily fail to perceive that the Afrikaner nationalists' strategy to gain control of the Mine Workers'

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1. L. Naudé, *op.cit.*; B.M. Touyz, *op.cit.*

Union probably differed considerably from the strategy to gain control of a trade union which had a different system of government. It should be noted that very little literature has appeared on trade union government in South Africa.<sup>1</sup>

Naudé and Touyz discussed in detail the membership characteristics of the Mine Workers' Union and the Garment Workers' Union respectively<sup>2</sup>; and the Simonses provided a fairly clear picture of the racial composition of the country's trade unions in general.<sup>3</sup> On the other hand, Davies, Hepple and O'Meara paid little attention to the racial composition of trade unions and tended to assume - sometimes incorrectly - that the trade unions which experienced Afrikaner nationalist factional activity either had no non-white members or that only the white members were enfranchised. Furthermore, the

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1. For superficial reviews of trade union structures in South Africa see, for example, H.G. Ringrose, Trade Unions in Natal, and James F. Trembath and Ernest Gitsham, A First Account of Labour Organisation in South Africa. The following studies are among a number of works which paid some attention to the system of government and democratic character of individual unions: Stephen Cock, "A Study of Politics, Race and Racism in the National Union of Distributive Workers 1948-1966", B.A. Honours dissertation, University of Cape Town, 1980; Albert J. Downes, Printers' Saga, being a History of the South African Typographical Union; J. Maree, "Problems with Trade Union Democracy: Case Study of the Garment Workers' Union of the Western Province", in South African Labour Bulletin, vol. 3 no. 2, September 1976, pp. 62-73; Martin Nicol, "The Garment Workers' Union of the Cape Peninsula and the Garment Workers' National Unity Movement 1927-1955", Economic Honours dissertation, University of Cape Town, 1977. A number of government commissions have touched upon the system of government and the democratic character of the Garment Workers' Union and the Mine Workers' Union. See the Selected Bibliography below.
  2. L. Naudé, op.cit.; B.M. Touyz, op.cit.
  3. H.J. Simons and R.E. Simons, op.cit., pp. 154, 197, 226-228, 330, 341, 379-381, 535.

three authors failed to grasp the importance, *inter alia*, of the regional distribution of a union's membership (e.g., the question whether a union's membership was concentrated in the Transvaal or spread over the whole country).<sup>1</sup> The failure of Davies, Hepple and O'Meara to grasp the importance of factors such as the membership characteristics and the systems of government of trade unions suggests that they were not deeply steeped in the general literature on trade unionism - e.g., the studies by the Webbs and others.<sup>2</sup>

The broad review of the Afrikaner nationalists' assault on the trade union movement in this study will provide much evidence in support of Davies's, Hepple's and O'Meara's claims that the Afrikaner nationalists' trade union activities in general played an important role in mobilising the Afrikaner workers behind the National Party's banner. A major object of this study is to show that there was no real paradox between the National Party's success in mobilising a considerable proportion of the Afrikaner workers in the Transvaal behind its banner and the Afrikaner nationalists' limited success in gaining control of trade unions.

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1. R.H. Davies, Capital, State and White Labour in S.A. 1900-1960, op.cit., passim; A. Hepple, op.cit.; D. O'Meara, "Assault on White Trade Unionism in S.A.", op.cit., passim.
  2. e.g., Sidney Webb and Beatrice Webb, Industrial Democracy; S. Webb and B. Webb, The History of Trade Unionism; B.C. Roberts, Trade Union Government and Administration in Great Britain.

Firstly, we shall explain why the Afrikaner nationalists achieved limited success in their attempts to gain control of individual trade unions. We shall argue that the membership characteristics and the systems of government of trade unions are crucial variables in any analysis of the Afrikaner nationalists' successes and failures in the individual trade unions. A number of 'structural' factors will be identified which assisted the incumbent union leaderships to turn back the challenges of the Afrikaner nationalists.

Secondly, we shall show that the National Party's electoral successes in the urban areas of the Transvaal during the forties and the first half of the fifties were not inconsistent with trends within numerous trade unions in the province. In other words, we shall show that while the Afrikaner nationalists achieved limited success in their attempts to gain control of trade unions, they not infrequently dominated union branches and won union organising post elections in areas where the National Party enjoyed considerable electoral support. Indeed, we shall see that the Pretoria local committee of the South African Trades and Labour Council, whose affiliates consisted of Pretoria-based trade unions and local branches of national and provincial trade unions, fell under the control of Afrikaner nationalist sympathisers during the second half of the 1940's.

We shall also argue that ethnic, racial and 'economic' factors - which were often interlinked with each other - played important roles in influencing workers' support for christian-national trade unionism and the National Party. While not denying the importance of 'economic' factors, we shall argue that Davies and O'Meara have overemphasised them at the expense of ethnic and racial factors.

An analysis of the Afrikaner nationalists' campaigns among the white workers would be incomplete without an examination of the main organisations of the white labour movement during this period, i.e., the South African Labour Party and the South African Trades and Labour Council. We shall refer to the two organisations and their trade union affiliates as the 'social democratic' movement rather than as the white labour movement. The term 'social democratic' movement is more appropriate as the two organisations tended to propagate a reformist economic policy and their affiliates included trade unions which had non-white members. It must be noted that the 'social democratic' movement supported the white supremacist system in the country.

The Communist Party, which advocated a multi-racial policy, enjoyed little support among the white workers and it was

essentially left to the 'social democratic' movement to act as the bulwark against the Afrikaner nationalists' assault on the labour movement. The 'social democratic' movement's activities in defence of the labour movement operated at two levels.

At the one level, the South African Labour Party sought to mobilise the white workers behind its banner and the South African Trades and Labour Council engaged in activities which were designed to combat the growth of christian-nationalist and fascist sentiments among the white workers. Davies, Hepple, O'Meara and the Simonses paid little attention to this theme. While Davies and O'Meara assumed for the purposes of their analyses that the South African Labour Party enjoyed at least some support among the Afrikaner workers during the thirties and forties, the Simonses implied that the Party enjoyed very little support among the Afrikaner workers throughout this period.<sup>1</sup> The Simonses made passing reference to an anti-fascist organisation which existed for a short period in 1934.<sup>2</sup>

At the other level, the 'social democratic' movement's - and in particular the trade unions' - ability to care for

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1. R.H. Davies, Capital, State and White Labour in S.A. 1900-1960, op.cit.; A. Hepple, op.cit.; D. O'Meara, "Assault on White Trade Unionism in S.A.", op.cit.; H.J. Simons and R.E. Simons, op.cit., passim.

2. H.J. Simons and R.E. Simons, op.cit., p. 471.

the economic needs of the (white) workers was an important factor which influenced union members' support for the existing trade union structures and collective bargaining machinery. It will be recalled that the National Party advocated the virtual destruction of the existing trade union structures and collective bargaining machinery.

This study will provide a comprehensive review of the South African Labour Party and the South African Trades and Labour Council. The object of the review will be to examine the two organisations' roles as defenders of the white labour movement. It will be argued that the 'social democratic' movement operated relatively successfully in defence of the labour movement during the 1930's, but that it provided little opposition during the 1940's and the first half of the 1950's to the growing threat of christian-national trade unionism and the post-1948 National Party government's assault on the labour movement.

We shall argue that the South African Labour Party enjoyed a significant degree of support among the Afrikaner workers on the Witwatersrand during the 1930's, but that its Afrikaner support base dwindled rapidly from towards the close of the decade. In addition, it will be shown that in marked contrast to its activities during the 1930's, the South African Trades and Labour Council engaged in very little activity in defence



of the labour movement during the 1940's and the first half of the 1950's. We shall identify a number of factors which contributed to the 'social democratic' movement's failure/inability to act as defenders of the labour movement during the 1940's and the first half of the 1950's.

It will be argued that one of the factors which undoubtedly contributed to the rapid erosion of the South African Labour Party's Afrikaner support base was the 'social democratic' movement's alliance with Smuts's United Party during the 1940's and the first half of the 1950's. The alliance was exemplified by the South African Labour Party's electoral pacts with Smuts's United Party in the 1943, 1948 and 1953 general elections. The objective grounds for the alliance were, firstly, the two groups' support for South Africa's participation in the Second World War on Britain's side; secondly, the two groups' support for the existing trade union structures and collective bargaining machinery; and finally, the two groups' opposition to any division among the white population on ethnic lines. Thus, with the exception of the 1930's, the struggle between the 'social democratic' movement and the Afrikaner nationalists must not be seen as primarily a struggle between ideologies of class and Afrikaner nationalism. It should rather be seen as a struggle between the protagonists of conciliation (i.e., the 'social democratic' movement and Smuts's United Party) and the supporters of Afrikaner nationalism.

In sum, the overriding objective of the study is to provide a descriptive account of the 'social democratic' movement in the Transvaal between 1930 and 1954. More specifically, the study will examine, firstly, the Afrikaner nationalists'/ National Party government's assault on the labour movement and, secondly, the 'social democratic' movement's general activity in defence of the labour movement. We noted in the Abstract that a limited amount of literature has appeared on the white labour movement during this period. While a number of studies have appeared on individual trade unions, there is virtually no literature available on the South African Labour Party and the South African Trades and Labour Council.<sup>1</sup> This study will fill an important gap in the literature on South African politics and labour history during the thirties, forties and fifties.

The need for a descriptive study on the white labour movement during the thirties, forties and fifties is highlighted by Davies's and O'Meara's works which contain almost as many factual errors/omissions as correct statements in regard to the South African Labour Party, the South African Trades and Labour Council and the individual trade unions (attention will be drawn in this study to a number of Davies's and O'Meara's errors). If this study provides a useful factual source for theoretical studies on South Africa, it will have achieved its primary purpose.

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1. Limited references to the South African Labour Party and the South African Trades and Labour Council can be found in a few works. See, for example, I.L. Walker and B. Weinbren, *op.cit.*, and H.J. Simons and R.E. Simons, *op.cit.* See the Selected Bibliography for the studies on the individual trade unions.

The first part of the study will examine the Afrikaner nationalists' assault on the trade union movement in general and on five trade unions in particular, i.e., the Garment Workers' Union, the Johannesburg Municipal Transport Workers' Union, the Mine Workers' Union, the Amalgamated Society of Woodworkers and the Building Workers' Industrial Union.

The second part of the study will examine the South African Labour Party and the South African Trades and Labour Council.

PART ONE

THE AFRIKANER NATIONALIST  
ASSAULT ON THE TRADE  
UNION MOVEMENT

## CHAPTER II

### INTRODUCTION

#### A. Industrial and Labour Review

The large-scale urbanisation of rural Afrikaners had been in progress since the last years of the nineteenth century. The greater mechanisation of industry from the mid-1920's caused the traditional skilled/unskilled division of labour to be increasingly displaced by an intermediate group of semi-skilled (machine) operators. This trend provided the newly urbanised Afrikaner workers, who were generally unskilled, with some prospect of upward occupational mobility.<sup>1</sup>

Although Afrikaner youths, despite obstacles, increasingly entered crafts as apprentices, the bulk of the Afrikaner workforce found its occupational mobility limited by the apprenticeship system.<sup>2</sup> According to O'Meara, in 1939 almost 40 per cent of all adult male Afrikaners in South

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1. B.M. Touyz, op.cit., pp. 8, 71.

2. Ibid., pp. 71-72.

Africa were found in the four occupational categories of unskilled labourer, miner, railway worker and bricklayer (compared with just 10 per cent of "other whites").<sup>1</sup>

In marked contrast to the position in the Transvaal, Coloured and Indian workers in the coastal towns were employed in large numbers as semi-skilled machine operators and, to a lesser extent, as artisans. Virtually all the artisans and semi-skilled machine operators in the Transvaal at the beginning of the 1930's were white. The traditionally Anglophone-dominated craft unions in the Transvaal resented the intrusion of lower-paid (white and generally Afrikaner) semi-skilled workers into occupational spheres which were previously their preserve.<sup>2</sup> Thus, for instance, the ironmoulders employed at the Pretoria railway workshops came out on strike in 1934 over an attempt by the railway administration to introduce semi-skilled workers to certain operations.<sup>3</sup>

From the mid-1920's an increasing number of craft unions enrolled semi-skilled workers as members. The decision of the craft unions to enrol semi-skilled workers as members reflected the changing character of the workforce

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1. S. Pauw, *Die Beroepsarbeid van die Afrikaner in die Stad*, p. 235, cited in D. O'Meara, "Assault on White Trade Unionism in S.A.", op.cit., p. 51.
  2. B.M. Touyz, op.cit., pp. 51, 71.
  3. Minutes of I.M.S.E.C. Meeting, 15 February 1934. I.M.S. Archives; Minutes of I.M.S. Extraordinary E.C. Meeting, 18 February 1934, op.cit.; Minutes of I.M.S. Special E.C. Meeting, 6 March 1934, op.cit.

in their trades.<sup>1</sup> However, many of these craft unions adopted constitutional devices which ensured that the artisans retained their dominant position in the unions.

Thus, for example, in 1936 the semi-skilled members of the South African Boilermakers', Ironworkers' and Shipbuilders' Society employed at the South African Iron and Steel Corporation's Pretoria plant seceded from the Society and established the South African Iron, Steel and Kindred Trades Association. A major factor which contributed to the secession was the Society's refusal to grant the semi-skilled members at the Pretoria plant greater representation on the Society's executive council.<sup>2</sup>

In terms of the long-established "civilised labour policy" the state sought to find and to create employment opportunities for the so-called "poor whites" (i.e., usually newly urbanised unskilled Afrikaners). The Department of Labour consistently brought pressure to bear on numerous industrial councils during the 1930's to include provisions in their industrial agreements which would facilitate the employment

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1. B.M. Touyz, op.cit., p. 21; J.F. Trembath and E. Gitsham, op.cit., pp. 53-117; A.E.U.M.R., September 1946. The trade unions continued to be known as craft unions notwithstanding their enrolment of semi-skilled workers as members. A number of authors have incorrectly dated the craft unions' decisions to enrol semi-skilled workers as members to the Second World War period. See, for example, Jon Lewis, "South African Craft Unions and Dilution during the Second World War", seminar paper, University of York, 1979.
  2. (?), C Division to the Registrar. Application for Registration, the S.A. Iron, Steel and Kindred Trades Association, 8 December 1936. Dept. of Labour Files, box 761. Transvaal Archives; Die Vaderland, 5 August 1936. For further information on the Association see pp. 78, 206, 219-220, 322-324 below.

of whites as unskilled labourers.<sup>1</sup> Some craft unions were opposed to whites being employed as unskilled labourers in their trades. There was, for example, some apprehension that the higher wages of the white labourers would have an adverse effect on the artisans' wage standard.<sup>2</sup>

South Africa's industries expanded considerably during the 1930's and 1940's and this was reflected in the growing number of workers employed in the industrial sector. While the total number of white production and related employees in private industry in the country increased from 59 029 in 1933/1934 to 144 768 in 1952/1953, the number of non-white workers increased from 104 962 to 501 736 (whites as a proportion of the workforce decreased from 36 per cent in 1933/1934 to 22,4 per cent in 1952/1953).<sup>3</sup> With full white employment during the Second World War a large number of Coloured and black workers in the Transvaal moved into semi-skilled occupations as machine operators, etc.

Davies has asserted that the racial division of labour in the Transvaal was not undermined by the increasing employment of blacks as semi-skilled workers during the 1940's. He stated that as the black semi-skilled workers were brought into industries the white workers were reassigned 'upwards'

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1. A.S.W.M.R., May 1935, July 1935, January 1936, October 1939; Minutes of I.M.S. General Meeting, 29 June 1934, 5 April 1935, op.cit.; Minutes of I.M.S.E.C. Meeting, 3 August 1934, 11 October 1939, op.cit. An industrial council consisted of representatives from the registered trade union(s) and employers' federation(s) in a particular industry (e.g., the Garment Workers' Union and the Transvaal Clothing Manufacturers' Association).
  2. A.S.W.M.R., February 1935, May 1935, July 1935.
  3. Union Statistics for Fifty Years 1910-1960, p. 68.



to other places in the division of labour.<sup>1</sup> Although he never really comes to grips with the issue, O'Meara appeared to argue that the increasing employment of semi-skilled black workers in the Transvaal resulted in the racial division of labour in the province being undermined to a significant extent during the 1940's.<sup>2</sup>

Davies and O'Meara stated that the white workers occupying places in the lower strata of industrial employment feared that the influx of black semi-skilled workers might have a detrimental effect on their economic position. Davies suggested that these white workers feared that the reclassification of occupations as black areas of employment would narrow their prospects of obtaining employment during a recession. The two authors stressed that the influx of semi-skilled black workers into industries played a crucial role in shaping Afrikaner workers' support for christian-national trade unionism and the National Party (N.P.).<sup>3</sup>

There was a relatively small number of Coloureds and Indians resident in the Transvaal.<sup>4</sup> Nevertheless, the 1940's witnessed the influx of a considerable number of Coloured and Indian workers into a few of the province's industries (e.g., the

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1. R.H. Davies, Capital, State and White Labour in S.A. 1900-1960, op.cit., pp. 291-292, 309-312.
  2. D. O'Meara, "Assault on White Trade Unionism in S.A.", op.cit., pp. 47-50; D. O'Meara, "Class, Capital and Ideology in the Development of Afrikaner Nationalism", op.cit., pp. 83, 306-307.
  3. R.H. Davies, Capital, State and White Labour in S.A. 1900-1960, op.cit., pp. 293, 309-312, 317-318; D. O'Meara, "Assault on White Trade Unionism in S.A.", op.cit., pp. 49-52; D. O'Meara, "Class, Capital and Ideology in the Development of Afrikaner Nationalism", op.cit., pp. 306-317.
  4. Union Statistics for Fifty Years 1910-1960, p. A4.

clothing manufacturing and leather industries).<sup>1</sup> Thus, for example, the proportion of Coloureds and Indians employed in the Witwatersrand clothing manufacturing industry rose from 2 per cent in 1936 to 22,1 per cent a decade later (to approximately 2 782 Coloureds and 202 Indians).<sup>2</sup> The Coloured and Indian workers in the industry were generally employed in the same occupations as their white colleagues (i.e., mainly as machinists). Although many white garment workers were opposed to Coloureds and Indians being employed as machinists, their opposition was based more on a feeling of 'status reduction' than from any economic considerations (e.g., the fear of being eased out of the industry).<sup>3</sup>

Davies ignored the influx of Coloured and Indian workers into the Transvaal industries.<sup>4</sup> While O'Meara failed to mention the general influx of Coloured and Indian workers into the Transvaal industries, he made passing reference to the influx of Coloureds into the province's clothing manufacturing industry.<sup>5</sup> The failure of Davies and O'Meara to come to grips with the question of the influx of Coloured and Indian workers into the Transvaal industries was a serious omission - particularly in view of the importance of the Afrikaner nationalists' attempts to gain control of the Garment Workers' Union (G.W.U.).

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1. B.M. Touyz, op.cit., pp. 27-28; Judgment of Naser J., delivered 29 November 1955, Transvaal Leather and Allied Trades Industrial Union vs. B.J. Schoeman and Another, W.L.D., pp. 1, 5. G.W.U. Archives, BCC 3-1.
  2. B.M. Touyz, op.cit., pp. 27-28.
  3. Ibid., pp. 70-177.
  4. R.H. Davies, Capital, State and White Labour in S.A. 1900-1960, op.cit., passim.
  5. D. O'Meara, "Assault on White Trade Unionism in S.A.", op.cit., pp. 69-70.

It is clear from our discussion that a significant number of whites were employed as manual workers during the period under review in the thesis (the term manual worker includes people employed, inter alia, as transport workers, artisans, machine operators and unskilled labourers). Davies produced statistics which showed that the proportion of the economically active white population in South Africa which can be roughly classified as manual workers decreased from 29,24 per cent in 1936 to 28,65 per cent in 1946 and to only 17,48 per cent in 1960.<sup>1</sup> Davies excluded the white miners from his manual worker category. He showed that the white miners (which includes the occupational categories of underground miner, reduction worker and stationary engine driver) were employed essentially as supervisors of black labour during the thirties, forties and fifties.<sup>2</sup>

The period after 1946 witnessed a notable increase in the proportions of the economically active white population which were employed as non-manual workers by the state, municipalities, provinces, and by commercial and financial institutions. Thus, for example, the proportion of the economically active white population in South Africa which can be roughly classified as white collar workers employed in commercial and financial institutions increased from 16,16 per cent in 1936 to 18,7 per cent in 1946 and to 26,24 per cent in 1960. Davies did not differentiate between

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1. R.H. Davies, Capital, State and White Labour in S.A. 1900-1960, op.cit., pp. 369-373 appendix 1.

2. Ibid., pp. 65-72, 369-373 appendix 1.

English-speaking and Afrikaans-speaking workers in his analysis of the economically active white population.<sup>1</sup>

The South African population censuses frequently failed either to distinguish or to distinguish clearly between English-speaking and Afrikaans-speaking workers. The statistics in the 1926 population census show that a large majority of the white manual workers (as defined by Davies) in South Africa's urban areas in the mid-1920's were English-speaking.<sup>2</sup>

In marked contrast to the 1936 population census, the 1946 and the 1960 censuses distinguished clearly between English-speaking and Afrikaans-speaking workers. Thus, for example, it can be stated that Afrikaners comprised approximately 55,4 per cent of the white male manual workers in South Africa in 1946, English-speakers approximately 41,2 per cent and other whites (i.e., other language groups and those who used both English and Afrikaans as their home language) approximately 3,4 per cent.<sup>3</sup>

The bulk of the white male manual workers in 1946 were employed in two sectors of the economy, i.e., the "industrial" sector and the "transport and communication" sector (which includes the railways). Afrikaners comprised

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1. Ibid., pp. 369-373 appendix 1.

2. South African Population Census, 4 May 1926, p. 192 table CLXXXII. U.G. 4 1931.

3. The statistics are derived from the 1946 population census. See the South African Population Census, 7 May 1946, vol. v, p. 42 table 3. U.G. 41 1954.

approximately 46,5 per cent of the white male manual workers employed in the "industrial" sector of South Africa's economy in 1946 and approximately 74,5 per cent of the white male manual workers employed in the "transport and communication" sector. In numerical terms, approximately 77 000 Afrikaner male manual workers were employed in the "industrial" sector of the country's economy in 1946 and approximately 55 000 were employed in the "transport and communication" sector.<sup>1</sup>

Finally, it must be noted that Afrikaners comprised approximately 60,5 per cent of the white male manual workers in South Africa in 1960, English-speakers approximately 33 per cent and other whites approximately 6,5 per cent.<sup>2</sup> In sum, the 1946 and the 1960 census statistics examined above show that the proportion of the economically active white population employed as manual workers decreased substantially after 1946 and that the dwindling number of manual workers became increasingly Afrikaans in character.

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1. Ibid.

2. The statistics are derived from the 1960 population census. See the South African Population Census, 6 September 1960, vol. 8 no. 2, p. 74 table A4.

B.        Democracy and Systems of Government  
            in South African Trade Unions

We noted in the Introduction that the membership characteristics and the systems of government of trade unions are crucial variables in any analysis of the Afrikaner nationalists' successes and failures in the individual unions. We also noted that Davies, Hepple and O'Meara essentially failed to examine the membership characteristics, systems of government and, with the exception of the Mine Workers' Union (M.W.U.), the democratic character of the trade unions which were subjected to Afrikaner nationalist factional activity.

## 1. Trade Union Characteristics

A small and regionally-based trade union which had no branches usually used a general meeting of its members as the union's legislative/supreme body. Union elections for executive council positions, etc., were often held at the general meeting. On the other hand, trade unions which had large memberships and/or branches scattered over the province(s) used a variety of systems of government.

As in the British experience the structural development of the South African trade unions which had large memberships and/or branches scattered over the province(s) was complex and uneven, varying from unions which used the "governing branch" system to those which embraced representative systems of government.<sup>1</sup> Very broadly, a trade union with a representative system of government used a conference of delegates from all the union's branches and/or district committees, etc., as the union's legislative/supreme body. The union's executive council was elected either by the conference or by the members from all the union's branches.

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1. For the constitutional evolution of the British trade union movement until the close of the nineteenth century see S. Webb and B. Webb, Industrial Democracy, pp. 3-141.

A trade union used the governing branch system when it was unwilling to adopt a representative system of government. ONE of the union's branches was used as the governing branch and the governing branch's executive committee functioned jointly as the branch's executive committee and as the union's executive council. The governing branch's general meeting elected the branch executive committee/ union executive council and the branch's general meeting often served as the final arbiter of the union's affairs. In short, a governing branch controlled its union's affairs.

Numerous factors influenced the nature, character and evolution of trade union government in South Africa. Thus, for instance, trade unions which were originally established as branches of British unions (e.g., the Amalgamated Engineering Union (A.E.U.) and the Amalgamated Society of Woodworkers (A.S.W.)) or were established as a result of the amalgamation of regional unions (e.g., the South African Typographical Union (S.A.T.U.) and the National Union of Distributive Workers (N.U.D.W.)) had fully representative systems of government.<sup>1</sup> On the other hand, Johannesburg-based trade unions such as the G.W.U. and the Ironmoulders' Society (I.M.S.), which established numerous small branches throughout the country,

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1. Norman Herd, Counter Attack, The Story of the South African Shop-workers; A.J. Downes, op.cit.; A.E.U.M.R., 1929-1954; A.S.W.M.R., 1914-1954.



broadly retained the governing branch system for many years. In other words, the Johannesburg branch of the two trade unions operated as the governing branch.<sup>1</sup>

The period under review in the thesis witnessed the constitutional evolution of numerous important trade unions. Thus, for example, the G.W.U. and the I.M.S. finally adopted fully representative systems of government in the early 1950's.<sup>2</sup> A number of regional trade unions with relatively static numerical memberships retained their simple constitutional structures (e.g., the Johannesburg Municipal Transport Workers' Union (J.M.T.W.U.)).<sup>3</sup>

While there were a number of exceptions to the general trend, it can be said that the large national trade unions had their headquarters in Johannesburg and that their essentially lay executive councils met regularly in the city. Thus the candidates for the executive council elections were almost always drawn from the Witwatersrand and Pretoria areas.<sup>4</sup>

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1. B.M. Touyz, op.cit., pp. 20-42; See the I.M.S. Archives generally.
  2. B.M. Touyz, op.cit., pp. 32-34; See the I.M.S. Archives generally.
  3. See the J.M.T.W.U. Archives generally.
  4. The statement is based on an overall review of the material examined in regard to the individual unions.

We must now turn our attention to the membership characteristics of South Africa's trade unions. Firstly, it must be noted that three nebulous categories of trade unions can be identified in the American, British and European labour movements, i.e., the craft union, the industrial union and the general workers' union. Very broadly, a craft union enrolled craftsmen in specific occupation(s) as members notwithstanding the fact that the craftsmen were employed in different industries. Thus, for example, a woodworkers' craft union could enrol the carpenters who were employed, inter alia, in the building and furniture industries as members. An industrial union enrolled the workers employed in some, if not all, of the occupations in a specific industry (e.g., the textile industry) as members. A general workers' union enrolled all workers as members, irrespective of occupation, trade, industry or skill.

Virtually all the white-dominated trade unions in South Africa were registered under the Industrial Conciliation Act. In terms of the Act craft unions and industrial unions were eligible for registration but not general workers' unions. The registered craft unions were permitted to enrol the semi-skilled workers in their trades as members.<sup>1</sup>

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1. Judgment of Solomon J., delivered 12 December 1938, B.W.I.U. vs. the Minister of Labour, T.P.D., pp. 1-7. G.W.U. Archives, BCC 3-1.

It will be recalled that although numerous craft unions enrolled semi-skilled workers as members, the semi-skilled members were not always granted full status in the unions.<sup>1</sup> For example, the vote of a semi-skilled member of the S.A.T.U. was worth half that of a craftsman's.<sup>2</sup>

The admission of non-white workers to white-dominated trade unions was a complex issue. A few of the large national trade unions such as the South African Association of Municipal Employees and the South African Society of Bank Officials enrolled only whites as members. In addition, most of the national railway workers' unions and numerous regional trade unions enrolled only whites as members. The regional trade unions which enrolled only whites as members included the three Transvaal-based mining workers' unions (i.e., the M.W.U., the South African Engine Drivers' and Firemen's Association (sic), and the South African Reduction Workers' Association).<sup>3</sup>

Many of the national trade unions admitted non-whites (i.e., Coloureds and Indians) as members and they were generally eligible to vote in union elections, etc.<sup>4</sup> However, while a large number of these trade unions enrolled whites and non-whites into mixed and/or segregated branches in the Cape

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1. See pp. 31-32 above.

2. Report of Proceedings of the Annual Conference of the S.A.T.U., Cape Town, 1-13 November 1923, branch voting list. The South African Library; S.A.T.J., June 1935, June 1936, June 1940, February 1941, February 1948.

3. Annexure D, in T. & L.C.N.E.C. Memorandum Submitted to the Industrial Legislation Commission by the T. & L.C., Johannesburg, December 1948. T.U.C.S.A. Archives, DD 10.23.

4. Ibid. For the position in the A.S.W. and the B.W.I.U. see pp. 124-126 below.

and/or Natal, they admitted only whites as members in the Transvaal (e.g., the A.S.W., the I.M.S., the Building Workers' Industrial Union and the National Union of Railway and Harbour Servants).<sup>1</sup>

The mixed national trade unions which enrolled only whites as members in the Transvaal were faced with numerous difficulties over the years. For example, friction occurred at union conferences, etc., over the presence of non-white delegates<sup>2</sup> and problems arose when non-white members wished to move to the Transvaal.<sup>3</sup> The I.M.S. resolved in 1935 that non-white MEMBERS who moved to the Transvaal would be permitted to work as moulders in the province's foundries (sic).<sup>4</sup>

The trade unions which enrolled Coloureds and Indians in the Transvaal adopted various constitutional strategies. For example, the Transvaal Leather and Allied Trades

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1. Minutes of I.M.S. General Meeting, 23 December 1920, 1 April 1921, 5 April 1935, op.cit.; Minutes of I.M.S. Special General Meeting, 18 January 1921, 13 May 1921, op.cit.; Minutes of I.M.S.E.C. Meeting, 4 April 1935, 12 April 1935, op.cit.; Minutes of I.M.S. Special E.C. Meeting, 9 April 1935, op.cit.; Frederick Jacobus Opperman, "The Development of Staff Representation of the Non-European Employees of the South African Railways and Harbours Administration", M.A. dissertation, University of Potchefstroom, 1963, p. 25; For the A.S.W. and the B.W.I.U. see pp. 124-125 below.
  2. For the position in the B.W.I.U. see p. 126 below.
  3. Report of Proceedings of the Annual Conference of the S.A.T.U., Johannesburg, 25 June-2 July 1917, pp. 23-26, op.cit.; Minutes of the A.S.W.E.C. Meeting, 17 July 1942. A.U. of B.T.W. of S.A. Archives.
  4. Minutes of I.M.S. General Meeting, 5 April 1935, op.cit.; Minutes of I.M.S.E.C. Meeting, 4 April 1935, 12 April 1935, op.cit.; Minutes of I.M.S. Special E.C. Meeting, 9 April 1935, op.cit.

Industrial Union did not discriminate between its members on the basis of colour.<sup>1</sup> On the other hand, the G.W.U. and the Witwatersrand Liquor and Catering Trade Employees' Union enrolled their white and non-white members into segregated branches. While the Witwatersrand Liquor and Catering Trade Employees' Union allowed its non-white branch representation on the Union's executive council, the G.W.U. remained under the exclusive control of its white members until early 1953.<sup>2</sup>

The proportion of whites in numerous national and regional industrial unions such as the G.W.U., the Transvaal Leather and Allied Trades Industrial Union and the Textile Workers' Industrial Union decreased substantially between 1939 and the mid-1950's. Thus, for example, in 1939 approximately three-quarters of the Transvaal Leather and Allied Trades Industrial Union's membership was white while in 1953 approximately three-quarters of the Union's membership was Coloured.<sup>3</sup>

Finally, it should be noted that the definition of "employee" in the Industrial Conciliation Act was generally believed to

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1. Judgment of Naser J., delivered 29 November 1955, Transvaal Leather and Allied Trades Industrial Union vs. B.J. Schoeman and Another, W.L.D., pp. 1, 3, 5, 13, op.cit.
  2. E. Lawlor, Secretary, Witwatersrand Liquor and Catering Trade Employees' Union to Secretary, T. & L.C., 17 March 1942. T.U.C.S.A. Archives, DC 2-29; B.M. Touyz, op.cit., pp. 26-34.
  3. Judgment of Naser J., delivered 29 November 1955, Transvaal Leather and Allied Trades Industrial Union vs. B.J. Schoeman and Another, W.L.D., pp. 1, 5, op.cit. For information on the racial composition of the G.W.U. see pp. 92-93, 108 footnote 1 below.

exclude blacks. Consequently, the white-dominated trade unions, virtually all of which were registered under the Act, were unable to enrol blacks as members.

In late 1944 the Transvaal Provincial Division of the Supreme Court upheld part of a G.W.U. application and ruled that there was a loophole in the Industrial Conciliation Act and that black females were essentially eligible for membership of registered trade unions.<sup>1</sup> The G.W.U. and the Textile Workers' Industrial Union duly enrolled black females as members. The black female members were compelled to withdraw from the two trade unions after the promulgation of the Native Labour (Settlement of Disputes) Act in 1953. The Act, which did not recognise black trade unions, regulated the position of black workers and removed black females from the ambit of the Industrial Conciliation Act.<sup>2</sup>

It will be noted from Table I that even the larger trade unions had relatively small memberships during the period under review. While the larger trade unions often had numerous full-time officials, the small unions such as the I.M.S. and the J.M.T.W.U. generally employed one or two paid officials (as distinct from clerical staff).<sup>3</sup>

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1. The Garment Worker/Die Klerewerker, January/February 1945.
  2. B.M. Touyz, op.cit., pp. 31-32, 35; G. Melville, Secretary, Durban Branch, Textile Workers' Industrial Union to Secretary, T. & L.C., 13 August 1945. T.U.C.S.A. Archives, DC 18; T. & L.C. Annual Report and Balance Sheet for 1953 and Extended to Include the Period January to September 1954, p. 15. T.U.C.S.A. Archives.
  3. See the G.W.U., the N.U.D.W., the A.U. of B.T.W. of S.A. and the I.M.S. Archives generally.

Union members complained on occasion that the paid officials were dominating the individual trade unions and the labour movement in general.<sup>1</sup>

TABLE I  
MEMBERSHIP FIGURES OF SELECTED TRADE UNIONS.<sup>2</sup>

NAME	YEAR	MEMBER-SHIP
Amalgamated Bricklayers' Trade Union of South Africa	1946	1 375
Amalgamated Engineering Union	1945	15 824
Amalgamated Society of Woodworkers	1947	6 994
Building Workers' Industrial Union	1946	8 327
Garment Workers' Union	1946	14 156
Ironmoulders' Society	1952	2 919
Johannesburg Municipal Transport Workers' Union	1948	1 769
Mine Workers' Union	1946	16 988
National Union of Distributive Workers	1946	10 529
South African Electrical Workers' Association	1946	4 678
South African Engine Drivers' and Firemen's Association	1948	4 032
South African Theatre and Cinema Employees' Union	1946	2 000

1. Minutes of A.S.W.E.C. Meeting, 27 February 1942, op.cit.; Minutes of G.W.U.C.E.C. Meeting, 26 November 1951. G.W.U. Archives.
2. Minutes of the Annual Conference of the A.U. of B.T.W. of S.A., Johannesburg, 21 July 1952. T.U.C.S.A. Archives, DD 4-17; Minutes of I.M.S.N.E.C. Meeting, 21 March 1953, op.cit.; J.M.T.W.U. Annual Report 1947-1948 (n.d.). J.M.T.W.U. Archives; E.S. Sachs, General Secretary, G.W.U. to Secretary, T. & L.C., 17 January 1947. T.U.C.S.A. Archives, DA 7-1; Statement on S.A. Electrical Workers' Association's membership, 1947. T.U.C.S.A. Archives, DA 7-1; Secretary, T & L.C. to General Secretary, S.A. Theatre and Cinema Employees' Union, 21 February 1947. T.U.C.S.A. Archives, DA 7-1; Report of the M.W.U. Commission of Enquiry, 1946, par. 273. U.G. 36 1946; A.S.W.M.R., April 1947; A.E.U.M.R., January 1946; The Indicator, March 1948.

## 2. Trade Union Democracy

R. Michels concluded his analysis of the European working class movement with his now famous aphorism:

It is organisation which gives birth to the dominion of the elected over the electors, of the mandataries over the mandators, of the delegates over the delegators. Who says organisation, says oligarchy.<sup>1</sup>

He related the oligarchical character of an organisation directly to its size and structural complexity (the larger the organisation the more pronounced its oligarchical character).<sup>2</sup>

Michels stated that the leaders became firmly entrenched in their posts and that they did not necessarily reflect the forces at play in their organisation at any particular moment.<sup>3</sup> The leaders also exercised considerable autonomy in determining their organisation's policies, etc.<sup>4</sup>

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1. Robert Michels, Political Parties, A Sociological Study of the Oligarchical Tendencies of Modern Democracy, p. 418.

2. Ibid., pp. 37-39.

3. Ibid., pp. 99-113.

4. Ibid., pp. 92-96, 145-171; 227-237.



Numerous factors contributed to the leaders becoming entrenched in their posts (e.g., membership apathy;<sup>1</sup> the perceived indispensability of the leaders due to their fame, skills and expertise;<sup>2</sup> and the reluctance of full-time trade union leaders to return to their former manual occupations).<sup>3</sup>

Numerous authors, writing from a variety of perspectives, have differed over the extent to which trade unions conform to Michels's pattern of bureaucratised oligarchy.<sup>4</sup> A number of theorists have attempted to devise theories of trade union democracy and have generally noted that a trade union must be analysed within the context of its society's economy and industrial relations system (the definition of democracy tends to vary from study to study).<sup>5</sup>

R. Martin, for example, has argued that a trade union is democratic when dissident factions are permitted to function. The factions provide the potential means for the leadership's overthrow. Consequently, factions restrict a leadership's ability to ignore the views of the members.<sup>6</sup>

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1. Ibid., pp. 84-85.

2. Ibid., pp. 36-37, 64-65, 75-80, 86-93, 108, 145-147.

3. Ibid., pp. 87-88, 217-226, 289-297, 312-331.

4. e.g., Seymour M. Lipset, Martin Trow and James Coleman, Union Democracy, The Internal Politics of the International Typographical Union; Joseph Goldstein, The Government of British Trade Unions, A Study of Apathy and the Democratic Process in the Transport and General Workers' Union; David Edelstein and Malcolm Warner, Comparative Union Democracy, Organisation and Opposition in British and American Unions.

5. e.g., S.M. Lipset, M. Trow and J. Coleman, op.cit.; D. Edelstein and M. Warner, op.cit.; Roderick Martin, "Union Democracy: An Explanatory Framework", in Trade Unions, ed. W.E.J. McCarthy, pp. 188-207.

6. R. Martin, op.cit., pp. 191-192.

Martin stated that the leaders would not tolerate the existence of opposition factions unless "constrained" to do so. He identified numerous interlinking factors which either increased or reduced the leadership's ability to destroy the opposition factions in the union (e.g., the collective bargaining system, the degree of ownership concentration in an industry, the composition and educational standard of the members and the union's constitutional structures).<sup>1</sup>

It must be remembered that in contrast to the modern European and American labour movements the important South African trade unions during the period under review had very small memberships. Furthermore, not all the important South African trade unions had adopted representative systems of government.

The literature which touches upon the democratic character of South Africa's trade unions deals largely with trade unions which enrolled essentially females as members.<sup>2</sup> The works on the G.W.U., the Garment Workers' Union of the Cape Peninsula and the N.U.D.W. confirm the hypothesis in the general literature on trade union democracy that trade unions with essentially female memberships are characterised by strong leaderships and by limited participation by the rank and file members in shaping their unions' policies.<sup>3</sup>

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1. Ibid., pp. 193-206.

2. See p. 20 footnote 1 above.

3. S. Cock, op.cit.; J. Maree, op.cit.; M. Nicol, op.cit.; B.M. Touyz, op.cit. We shall refer to the N.U.D.W. on numerous occasions in the study and it should be noted that the Union enrolled essentially whites as members. The N.U.D.W. Archives show that, with the exception of a few ephemeral non-white branches in Natal and the Transvaal, the Union's only non-white branch was in the Western Cape. The G.W.U. is examined at pp. 92-93, 108 footnote 1 below.

It is not, of course, the purpose of the thesis to re-view the general democratic character of the South African trade unions. However, it can be stated that the executive councils of craft unions (e.g., the A.S.W. and the I.M.S.) were better equipped than their colleagues in industrial unions (e.g., the G.W.U., the J.M.T.W.U. and the M.W.U.) to control their top officials and to shape and guide their unions' policies. For example, the executive council members of craft unions were generally better educated than their colleagues in industrial unions.<sup>1</sup>

It should also be noted that the relatively narrow membership compositions of numerous trade unions, the collective bargaining system, etc., resulted in negotiations for industrial agreements in a variety of industries being conducted between a number of trade unions on the one side and an employers' federation(s) on the other (e.g., as was generally the case in the building and engineering industries).<sup>2</sup> Thus it was difficult for an individual trade union to influence industrial negotiations, threaten strike action, etc. In other words, the collective bargaining system weakened the ability of members of individual trade unions such as the A.S.W. and the I.M.S. to influence the negotiations for a new industrial agreement.

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1. See the A.U. of B.T.W. of S.A., the G.W.U., the J.M.T.W.U. and the I.M.S. Archives generally; for the M.W.U. see pp.115-116 below. The G.W.U., the J.M.T.W.U. and the M.W.U. did not enrol clerical workers as members. Few industrial unions in S.A. which enrolled manual workers admitted clerical workers as members.
  2. See the A.U. of B.T.W. of S.A. and the I.M.S. Archives generally.

On the other hand, a number of individual trade unions regularly concluded industrial agreements with their respective employers (e.g., the G.W.U., the J.M.T.W.U. and the S.A.T.U.).<sup>1</sup> The members of these trade unions were better positioned to ginger up their leaderships and to influence industrial negotiations.

C.        Afrikaner Nationalist Ideology and  
              The National Party's Labour Policy

The N.P. 'fused' with the South African Party in mid-1934 to form the United Party (U.P.). 'Fusion' split the N.P. and the Cape N.P. together with individual branches and members in the Transvaal and Orange Free State established the breakaway N.P. (then called the Gesuiwerde Nationalist Party).<sup>2</sup> Although the new N.P. was very weak in the Transvaal, much of the province's Afrikaner intelligentsia remained out of the U.P.<sup>3</sup>

Nineteen M.P.'s joined the breakaway N.P. However, only one of the M.P.'s, J.G. Strijdom, who represented the rural

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1. See the G.W.U. and the J.M.T.W.U. Archives generally; S.A.T.J., 1927-1954.
  2. D. O'Meara, "Assault on White Trade Unionism in S.A.", op.cit., p. 54.
  3. Ibid.; D. O'Meara, "The Afrikaner Broederbond 1927-1948: Class Vanguard of Afrikaner Nationalism", in Journal of Southern African Studies, vol. 3 no. 2, April 1977, pp. 169-170.

Waterberg constituency, came from the Transvaal. The Waterberg constituency was the only seat the N.P. won in the Transvaal in both the 1936 provincial council election and the 1938 general election.<sup>1</sup>

The N.P. subsequently consolidated its position in the Transvaal. The U.P. split over the war issue in late 1939 and many Afrikaners who had formerly supported the U.P. turned to the N.P. The N.P. won eleven Transvaal seats in the 1943 general election, thirty-two in the 1948 general election and forty-three in the 1953 general election.<sup>2</sup>

The Afrikaner nationalist ideology which emerged after 'fusion' was strongly influenced by the position of the Afrikaner in the economy. Coupled with the Afrikaner's comparatively disadvantaged position in the white labour force, was his very limited entrepreneurial role in the capitalist economy - with the traditional exception of commercial agriculture. By 1938/1939 Afrikaner-controlled enterprises in South Africa contributed just over 8 per cent to total turnover in commerce, 3 per cent of industrial output, 1 per cent of mining and 5 per cent of finance.<sup>3</sup>

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1. D. O'Meara, "Assault on White Trade Unionism in S.A.", op.cit., p. 54; N.M. Stultz, op.cit., p. 42; Hermanus B. Kruger, "Die Beroeps-en Politieke Samestelling van die Transvaalse Provinsiale Raad tydens die Uniale Tydperk", M.A. dissertation, University of South Africa, 1970, pp. 136-140; B.M. Schoeman, op.cit., pp. 234, 237.
  2. B.M. Schoeman, op.cit., pp. 271, 302, 334.
  3. Volkshandel, 11, September 1950, cited in D.O'Meara, "The Afrikaner Broederbond", op.cit., p. 174.

There was a broad consensus among the various streams of the Afrikaner nationalist ideological debate after 'fusion'. 'Afrikanerdom' was redefined to exclude the English-speaking members of the community. Nations constituted the basic unit of social organisation. Nations, each of which had an allotted task, were products of divine will and were distinguished from each other by culture in its widest sense. Although there were different views as to the role of the state, the overriding thrust was towards a strictly (state) regulated society. The ideology had an explicit republican eschatology.<sup>1</sup>

The Afrikaner nationalists argued that the Afrikaner's economic difficulties could be traced back to the fact that the country's capitalist economy was dominated by 'imperialist'/'foreign' interests. They accordingly stressed the need to establish Afrikaner enterprises and to mould the industrial economy to the requirements of 'Afrikanerdom'. Thus, for example, L.J. du Plessis, a prominent Afrikaner nationalist, declared in 1939 that

[in the past] we also accepted that the masses who were unable quickly and easily to adjust to capitalism would sink into poor whiteism.

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1. The earlier N.P. had defined Afrikaners as those whites who endorsed the principles of sovereignty, language equality and the economic nationalism of 'South Africa first'. For footnote and text see B.M. Touyz, *op.cit.*, pp. 73-74.

Sympathetically we belittled them and distanced ourselves from them, at best philanthropically offering them "alms" or poor relief from the state. And meanwhile this adjustment process [to foreign capitalism] was destroying our Volk by denationalising its economic leaders and pro-letarianising its producing masses. But in the awakening of consciousness, the Volk have perceived this too and the new national economic movement sets for itself the goal of reversing this process; no longer to tolerate the destruction of the Afrikaner Volk in an attempt to adapt to a foreign capitalist system, but to mobilise the Volk to capture this foreign system and transform and adapt it to our national character. <sup>1</sup>

The Afrikaner nationalist ideologues argued that a symbiotic relationship should exist between the social classes of the Afrikaner nation. The workers, who were expected to work hard, were entitled to a "fair wage". Entrepreneurs, on the other hand, had a duty to provide "service" in return for their profits. This state of affairs did not exist in South Africa - particularly as the capitalists were 'foreigners' and the white workers primarily Afrikaners.<sup>2</sup>

'Foreign' trade union leaders dominated the trade union movement. The 'foreign' capitalists entered into unholy alliances with the 'foreign' trade union leaders (e.g., by means of the

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1. E.P. du Plessis, 'n Volk Staen Op: Die Ekonomiese Volkskongres en Daarna, p. 104, cited in D. O'Meara, "Assault on White Trade Unionism in S.A.", op.cit., p. 63.
  2. B.M. Touyz, op.cit., p. 74.

closed shop provision) to their mutual pecuniary benefit - at the expense of and by the exploitation of the Afrikaner workers. Illogically, the Afrikaner nationalists also argued that the 'foreign'/'communist' trade union leaders propagated a class struggle irrespective of race and sought to bring down the capitalist system.<sup>1</sup>

In their pursuit of material gain the Afrikaner workers undermined their ethnic heritage. The ideologues stressed cultural factors and de-emphasised the material needs of the workers. Some activists such as Dr A. Hertzog appreciated the need to focus attention on the material welfare of the workers.<sup>2</sup>

From the second half of the 1930's the N.P. proposed the introduction of a quota and job reservation system to protect the white workers and to enable them to receive a higher minimum wage than their non-white counterparts. During the 1940's the N.P. promised the workers in the "key" industries that they would share in the profits of their respective industries (the gold-mining industry would be the first industry to fall under the scheme).<sup>3</sup>

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1. Ibid., pp. 74-75.

2. Ibid., p. 75.

3. Ibid., pp. 75-76.



The N.P.'s 1943 general election manifesto proposed the virtual destruction of the trade union movement. The manifesto stated that collective bargaining enabled the state to "evade its responsibility in connection with the fixing of proper wages". In addition, the collective bargaining system, inter alia, caused class conflict and restricted to a "small privileged group" the opportunity to become skilled workers.<sup>1</sup> Consequently, the system of collective bargaining would be replaced by a "system of state responsibility".<sup>2</sup>

A labour board would be established. The board's functions would include the determination of wages and conditions of employment for all workers.<sup>3</sup> Trade unions would be converted into "workers associations". The "workers associations" would fall under the direct control of the labour board; and would have the right, among other things, to negotiate with employers over "purely personal matters".<sup>4</sup>

Although the English edition of the N.P.'s 1948 general election manifesto proposed "that the system of collective bargaining be SUPPLEMENTED by a system of state responsibility" (my emphasis), the Party's labour policy remained largely unaltered. The labour board retained all its functions and trade unions were to fall under the direct control of the board.<sup>5</sup>

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1. Otto du Plessis, The New South Africa. Social-Economic Reform Scheme of the Reunited National Party, p. 10.
  2. Ibid., p. 9.
  3. Ibid.
  4. Ibid., p. 11.
  5. The Road to a New South Africa. Programme of Principles of the National Party, pp. 18-21, 20 (Quote in text). I have been unable to find a copy of the Afrikaans edition to verify the slight shift in policy.

Davies has suggested that the N.P.'s proposal virtually to destroy the trade union movement weakened the Party's electoral appeal among certain strata of the workers during the 1940's. He stated that the N.P. failed to gain the support of the bulk of the artisans (who naturally wished to preserve their 'monopoly of skills') and the majority of the industrial workers who were members of unions with a tradition of militant struggle.<sup>1</sup>

Indeed, there is evidence that N.P. candidates in working class constituencies on the Witwatersrand in the 1948 general election attempted to distance themselves from the official labour policy of the Party. Thus, J. Du Pisanie, who defeated the incumbent South African Labour Party (L.P.) M.P. in the Germiston constituency, issued a pamphlet during the election campaign in which he denied that he was an opponent of trade unionism (the allegation had been made in a G.W.U. pamphlet distributed among the garment workers in the constituency).<sup>2</sup>

Although the N.P. government launched a campaign against militant trade unionists after the Party had won the 1948 general election, the proposal virtually to destroy the trade union movement was never implemented.<sup>3</sup> The Industrial

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1. R.H. Davies, Capital, State and White Labour in S.A. 1900-1960, op.cit., pp. 302-303, 319-320.
  2. B.M. Touyz, op.cit., p. 142.
  3. For the N.P. government's assault on the trade union movement see, inter alia, pp. 60-153 below.

Conciliation Act of 1956 contained provisions which were designed to give effect to the proposal to introduce a job reservation and quota system to protect the white workers.<sup>1</sup>

D. Afrikaner Nationalist Organisations  
and the Trade Union Movement

With the weak parliamentary position of the N.P. in the Transvaal during the 1930's, the Afrikaner Broederbond (not to be seen as synonymous with the N.P.) came to dominate northern Afrikaner nationalism.<sup>2</sup> The Afrikaner Broederbond (A.B.), which operated in secret, was a co-ordinating and policy-making body. Its policies were implemented either through front organisations such as the Federasie van Afrikaanse Kultuurverenigings (F.A.K.) or by strategically located individuals.<sup>3</sup>

The development of Afrikaner capital formed a major policy thrust of the A.B. during the 1930's and 1940's. Thus, for example, in 1934 the A.B. established Volkskas, a

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1. M. Schaeffer and J.F. Heyne, Industrial Law in South Africa, pp. 109-119.
  2. D. O'Meara, "Assault on White Trade Unionism in S.A.", op.cit., p. 54.
  3. D. O'Meara, "The Afrikaner Broederbond", op.cit., pp. 166-167, 186.

co-operative bank in Pretoria. Volkskas lost its co-operative form in 1941 when it obtained registration as a commercial bank.<sup>1</sup> The A.B. also played a central role in the decision to establish an Afrikaner investment house, Federale Volksbeleggings, in late 1939.

The F.A.K. convened an Ekonomiese Volkskongres (Afrikaner People's Economic Congress) for October 1939. Funds had been collected during the Voortrekker centenary celebrations with the objective of assisting in the economic salvation of the urban Afrikaner. The Congress resolved to establish Federale Volksbeleggings and to invest half of the funds in the new corporation. The Congress also decided that the other half of the funds would be placed under the control of the Economic Institute of the F.A.K. The Congress instructed the Economic Institute to use the funds, inter alia, to further the Afrikaner nationalists' campaigns among the workers.<sup>2</sup> The Economic Institute provided financial assistance during the first half of the 1940's to the Afrikaner nationalists who were attempting to gain control of the M.W.U.<sup>3</sup>

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1. Ibid., pp. 182-183.

2. T. Dunbar Moodie, op.cit., pp. 201-204; Die Ekononiese Volkskongres, 3, 4, 5, October 1939, Bloemfontein, pp. 209-210.

3. D. O'Meara, "Assault on White Trade Unionism in S.A.", op.cit., p. 56.

The Congress also resolved to establish a new organisation, the Reddingsdaadbond (R.D.B.). The primary objective of the R.D.B. was to make the Afrikaners "economically conscious" and to mobilise support for the emergence of Afrikaner capital (i.e., to persuade Afrikaners to support Afrikaner undertakings). As part of its general strategy the R.D.B. endeavoured to mobilise Afrikaners in general to the cause of 'Afrikanerdom'. It emphasised the need to wean the workers from ideologies of class and to make them "part and parcel of the life of the Volk". Apart from organising Afrikaner recreations such as folk dancing and boeresport, the R.D.B. offered cheap life assurance schemes, set up trade schools and established a work placement bureau. By 1946 the R.D.B. had 381 branches with a total membership of approximately 65 000. However, its membership dwindled rapidly over the following years.<sup>1</sup>

Afrikaner nationalists generally appreciated that the Afrikaner workers' savings, consumer spending and trade union dues comprised an important source of funds for the Afrikaner 'economic movement', etc. Thus, for example, Dr A. Hertzog (lawyer and christian-national trade union activist) referred to the funds under trade union control in a speech to the Ekonomiese Volkskongres in October 1939 and added that

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1. Ibid., pp. 58-59, 59 (Quote in text); T. Dunbar Moodie, op.cit., pp. 205-206.

If we succeed in capturing the trade unions, every year, year after year, a sum of at least £290 000 could be devoted to the reconstruction of our Volk rather than its subversion.<sup>1</sup>

The need to mobilise the workers' support for the Afrikaner 'economic movement' reinforced the Afrikaner nationalists' general determination to win the workers to 'Afrikanerdom'.

In late 1936 the Nasionale Raad van Trustees (N.R.T.) was formed by Dr P. Meyer (the assistant secretary of the F.A.K.), C.F. de Wet (a manager of a Volkskas branch), Dr N. Diederichs (an academic) and Dr A. Hertzog.<sup>2</sup> Although the A.B.'s official history conceded that all the N.R.T.'s founders were members of the A.B., it denied that the A.B. as an organisation played a role in the N.R.T.'s establishment.<sup>3</sup>

According to the N.R.T.'s official history, the organisation was established with the interlinking aims of forming "right-minded" trade unions and of winning the Afrikaner worker to 'Afrikanerdom'. The main objective was to wean the Afrikaner worker from the L.P.<sup>4</sup>

Difficulty was experienced in raising the necessary funds for the N.R.T.'s organisational activities. Dr A. Hertzog

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1. Dr A. Hertzog quoted in D. O'Meara, "Assault on White Trade Unionism in S.A.", op.cit., p. 56.
  2. D. O'Meara, "Assault on White Trade Unionism in S.A.", op.cit., p. 55.
  3. A.N. Pelzer, Die Afrikaner-Broederbond: Eerste 50 Jaar, pp. 150-151.
  4. L. Naudé, op.cit., pp. 27, 257-258.

unsuccessfully approached his father, General J.B. Hertzog (the then premier), on two occasions for financial assistance.<sup>1</sup> General Hertzog later informed parliament why he had refused his son's requests:

I deny definitely that I myself was ever in any way unsympathetic towards the Mynwerkersbond [the christian-national trade union in the mining industry]. What has happened? My son, Albert Hertzog, does not agree with me in politics.... But he is not a Malanite; he does not belong to the [N.P.]. ...he approached me for financial support, saying that he and other young Afrikaners had the fixed intention of establishing an organisation to try and get hold of the poor young Afrikaners that were rushing into the towns from the countryside, and to keep them out of the wrong and bad movements that one always finds in a big city.... I said that...I could not support him financially and I said it was on this account. I said, as has only too fully been realised, that [the N.P.] was constantly engaged in establishing such organisations, so that they could get on the right side of the people and strengthen themselves as much as possible. ...he gave me the assurance...that that association had no connection, and did not intend to have anything to do with a political organisation. I warned him and said that I was afraid that the next day or the day after the movement might fall into the hands of the sharks, and then I did not want it to be possible for it to be said that I had assisted in establishing a political organisation which was hostile to my party.<sup>2</sup>

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1. Ibid., pp. 29-30.

2. Hansard, Assembly Debates, vol. 29, 8 April 1937, cols. 4435-4436.

The necessary finance to launch the campaign (a donation of two thousand pounds) was eventually obtained from a sympathiser in the Western Cape. The N.R.T.'s financial position stabilised after it received a substantial bequest in 1939.<sup>1</sup>

While the N.R.T. engaged in organisational activity among a variety of Afrikaner workers such as the textile workers in both Johannesburg and the 'rural' Western Cape, it focused its attention on the garment workers and underground miners on the Witwatersrand (with the emphasis on the latter). The N.R.T.'s general campaign petered out during the early years of the Second World War without having achieved any significant successes.<sup>2</sup>

However, the campaign among the miners was not completely abandoned and the N.R.T. returned to the fray with vigour in the post war years. A faction which enjoyed the support of the N.R.T. finally gained control of the M.W.U. at the close of the 1940's.<sup>3</sup> The N.R.T. had spent more than thirty thousand pounds in its various campaigns among the miners.<sup>4</sup>

The U.P. split over the war issue into two factions in September 1939. General J.B. Hertzog resigned as premier after

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1. L. Naudé, *op.cit.*, pp. 30-31, 100-114.

2. B.M. Touyz, *op.cit.*, pp. 80-81.

3. *Ibid.*, pp. 87-88; L. Naudé, *op.cit.*, pp. 185-201.

4. L. Naudé, *op.cit.*, pp. 30-31, 100-114.



parliament, had resolved by a narrow majority that South Africa would enter the war on Britain's side. Hertzog and approximately thirty-seven other U.P. M.P.'s who had voted against South Africa's participation in the war on Britain's side merged with the N.P.'s parliamentary caucus in January 1940 to form the Herenigde Nasionale of Volksparty - hereafter referred to as the N.P.<sup>1</sup> It will be recalled that General J. Smuts formed a pro-war coalition government with his faction of the U.P., the Dominion Party and the L.P.

The bulk of the former U.P. M.P.'s who joined the N.P. in January 1940 withdrew from the N.P. in two groups during the early 1940's. Firstly, General J.B. Hertzog resigned from the N.P. after a stormy conference of the Orange Free State N.P. in November 1940. The conference had rejected Hertzog's proposed programme of principles for the N.P. in the Orange Free State which, inter alia, had called for equal political and cultural rights for English-speaking and Afrikaans-speaking South Africans. Although Hertzog retired from politics, his dwindling band of supporters established the Afrikaner Party (A.P.) at the beginning of 1941. Ten former U.P. M.P.'s joined the new party.<sup>2</sup>

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1. N.M. Stultz, op.cit., pp. 60-61, 72, 78; T. Dunbar Moodie, op.cit., pp. 193-196, 208.
  2. N.M. Stultz, op.cit., pp. 74-76; T. Dunbar Moodie, op.cit., pp. 208-210.

Secondly, shortly after Hertzog's resignation, a group of approximately sixteen former U.P. M.P.'s formed a national-socialist ginger group (the New Order) within the N.P. parliamentary caucus. In June 1941 the national conference of the N.P. banned factions within the Party and the New Order group withdrew from the Party in January 1942.<sup>1</sup>

However, it was the Ossewa-Brandwag (O.B.) which posed the most serious threat to the N.P.'s claim during the early 1940's that it was the authentic representative of 'Afrikanerdom'. The O.B. was established in February 1939 as a quasi-militaristic 'cultural' organisation (its activities included parades and drill exercises). The O.B. viewed itself as a broad Volksbeweging (Afrikaner People's Movement) designed to bypass the divisive character of political parties. The O.B. propagated national-socialism and an elitist group within the Transvaal O.B., the Stormjaers, publicised their opposition to South Africa's participation in the Second World War by engaging in sabotage. Although the O.B.'s membership figures are extremely unreliable, a measure of the O.B.'s popularity at the beginning of the 1940's can be gauged

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1. N.M. Stultz, op.cit., pp. 76-78; T. Dunbar Moodie, op.cit., pp. 210-212; D. O'Meara, "Class, Capital and Ideology in the Development of Afrikaner Nationalism", op.cit., pp. 129-130.

from the organisation's claim that it had over 300 000 members at the close of 1941. The N.P., which viewed the O.B. as an increasingly dangerous rival, launched a campaign against the organisation towards the latter half of 1941.<sup>1</sup>

Smuts's U.P. was returned to power with a large majority in the 1943 general election. Although we shall examine the general election in a subsequent chapter of the thesis, it is necessary for us to note here that while the N.P. won forty-three seats in the election, the A.P. was defeated in all the twenty-four seats it contested. The O.B. and the New Order did not contest any seats in the election.<sup>2</sup>

The O.B.'s simmering dispute with the N.P. and the receding prospect of a German victory contributed to the steady decline in the O.B.'s popularity. It was against this background that the O.B. resolved to establish an Arbeidslaer (Labour Front) in late 1943.<sup>3</sup> Dr P. Meyer resigned from the N.R.T. to become the Arbeidslaer's "temporary" leader.<sup>4</sup> At least initially attempts were made to enrol workers into the Arbeidslaer.<sup>5</sup> The O.B. declared that the "purpose" of the Arbeidslaer was

1. N.M. Stultz, op.cit., pp. 78-83; T. Dunbar Moodie, op.cit., pp. 190-193, 212-233; Die O.B., 1941-1950.

2. B.M. Schoeman, op.cit., pp. 270-271.

3. Die O.B., 22 September 1943.

4. Ibid., 15 March 1944; D.O'Meara, "Assault on White Trade Unionism in S.A.", op.cit., p. 56.

5. Die O.B., 20 October 1943.

to bind the urban white worker - the conclusive power factor in the future - and his rural compatriot closer together by means of the Volksbeweging in order by so doing to oppose influences like communism which are dividing the People and at the same time to increase the striking power of the O.B. The method is, together with ideological cultivation of the workers, to win the trust and devotion of the worker by offering him O.B. support without asking him to leave or weaken his trade-unions or other organisations.

The general literature on the O.B. contains very little information on the Arbeidslaer and I have been unable to find any hard evidence of its activities.<sup>2</sup> However, it is clear that the Arbeidslaer's activities were limited and that its establishment was unable to prevent the continued decline of the O.B.

The N.P.'s poor performance in the urban areas of the Transvaal in the 1943 general election and the establishment of the Arbeidslaer undoubtedly contributed to the N.P.'s decision to increase its organisational activity among the workers.<sup>3</sup> During 1944 the N.P. established a Blanke Werkers se Beskermingsbond (B.W.B.B.) on the Witwatersrand and a Blanke Werkers Federasie (B.W.F.) in the 'rural' areas of the Western Cape.<sup>4</sup>

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1. O.B. Kommandant General's Annual Report, 1944, quoted in T. Dunbar Moodie, op.cit., pp. 231-232.

2. See e.g., Hans Van Rensburg, Their Paths Crossed Mine, Memoirs of the Commandant-General of the Ossewa-Brandwag; Frederik J. van Heerden, "Nasionaal-Sosialisme as Faktor in die Suid Afrikaanse Politiek, 1933-1948," PhD. dissertation, University of the Orange Free State, 1972.

3. For statistics of the 1943 general election see p. 289 Table VII below.

4. B.M. Touyz, op.cit., p. 82.

It would appear from the A.B.'s official history that moral and financial support was given to the B.W.B.B. but not to the Arbeidslaer.<sup>1</sup> The B.W.B.B. and the B.W.F., whose activities are discussed elsewhere in the thesis, remained active for most of the 1940's.<sup>2</sup>

The B.W.B.B.'s articles restricted membership to white Protestants<sup>3</sup> (Afrikaners are, of course, Protestants). The B.W.B.B. endeavoured to enrol members from the Afrikaner society in general and by the close of June 1946 the organisation's membership had reached 2 366 of which 1 308 were professional men, farmers, housewives, pensioners and others while the rest were workers employed in seventy-two occupations.<sup>4</sup>

According to its constitution the B.W.B.B. sought the assistance of all sections of the white community in solving (the white) workers' problems.<sup>5</sup> Support would be given to all attempts to extend employment opportunities through the establishment of South African owned undertakings.<sup>6</sup> The B.W.B.B. wanted a clear determination of the separate occupational spheres for white and non-white workers and sought the prohibition of mixed

1. A.N. Pelzer, op.cit., p. 152.

2. B.M. Touyz, op.cit., pp. 82-86, 139-140, 143-154. For information on the two organisations' activities see pp. 75, 103-104, 106-107, 132 below.

3. Constitution and Articles of the B.W.B.B., art. 1. G.W.U. Archives.

4. Die Blanke Werker, November 1946.

5. Constitution and Articles of the B.W.B.B., sec. 3(1)E, op.cit.

6. Ibid., sec. 3(1)F.

(i.e., white/non-white) trade unions.<sup>1</sup> It would endeavour to obtain just wages ("toereikende" - literally "adequate") and a share of the profits for the workers.<sup>2</sup> Like the Arbeidslaer it was committed to fight communist influences and to improve rural/urban relations between whites.<sup>3</sup>

By 1948 the R.D.B. had taken the B.W.B.B. under its wing. The B.W.B.B.'s 1948 campaign against the G.W.U. and its subsequent participation in the proceedings of the Commission of Enquiry into the G.W.U. (1948-1949) cost a great deal of money. The R.D.B. found its financial obligation onerous and, probably towards the close of 1949, withdrew its financial crutch from the B.W.B.B. J. Loubser, the full-time organising - secretary of the B.W.B.B., moved over to the Ko-ordinerende Raad van Suid Afrikaanse Vakverenigings (the Co-ordinating Council of South African Trades Unions) as its organising-secretary. Loubser continued, in part, his former activities (e.g., factional activity among the G.W.U. members).<sup>4</sup> The Ko-ordinerende Raad van Suid Afrikaanse Vakverenigings (K.R.S.A.V.) had been established in 1948 by a number of Pretoria-based trade unions which had withdrawn from the South African Trades and Labour Council (T. & L.C.) in 1947 in protest against the continued affiliation of black trade unions to the Council.<sup>5</sup>

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1. Ibid., secs. 3(2)J1, 3(2)J3.

2. Ibid., sec. 3(1)C.

3. Ibid., sec. 3(1)D; The New Era, 14 June 1945.

4. B.M. Touyz, op.cit., pp. 87-88, 159-161.

5. For a full discussion of the Pretoria-based unions' withdrawal from the South African Trades and Labour Council see pp. 217-220 below.

In early 1950 the now Afrikaner nationalist-controlled M.W.U. established a publishing company. Although the company's board of directors consisted of a majority of M.W.U. members, it included Dr A. Hertzog (now a N.P. M.P.) as chairman of the board and editor-in-chief. Prominent figures in the K.R.S.A.V. such as Loubser were closely associated with the company.<sup>1</sup>

The company published the official organ of the M.W.U. and separate newspapers directed at the garment and building workers (the latter two newspapers had a relatively ephemeral existence). While Die Klerewerkers-nuus opposed the G.W.U. leadership, Die Bouwerker concentrated its attention on discrediting the leadership of the largest building trade union, the Building Workers' Industrial Union (B.W.I.U.).<sup>2</sup>

An action committee was established in April 1950 probably by the assistant-secretary of the A.B.'s executive committee, G.L.H. Van Niekerk. Van Niekerk became secretary of the committee which included, inter alia, members of the leading "Volks" organisations, the Afrikaner churches and the M.W.U.<sup>3</sup>

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1. Report of the M.W.U. Commission of Enquiry, par.36. U.G. 52 1951; Judgment of Ramsbottom J., delivered 26 June 1951, "P.J. Huyser vs. Die Werkerspers Uitgewers...Beperk", W.L.D., p. 6. Exhibit in "E.S. Sachs vs. Die Werkerspers Uitgewers...Beperk". Court record no.:W.L.D. (Application) 1091 of 1952.
  2. Report of the M.W.U. Commission of Enquiry, par.36. U.G. 52 1951; Judgment of Ramsbottom J., delivered 26 June 1951, "P.J. Huyser vs. Die Werkerspers Uitgewers...Beperk", W.L.D., pp. 6, 10, 21. Exhibit, op.cit.
  3. A.N. Pelzer, op.cit., p. 154; Circular by G.L.H. Van Niekerk, 15 June 1952. G.W.U. Archives.

The committee, which had full-time as well as part-time organisers, focused its attention on the Witwatersrand and Pretoria garment, building and wood workers. The committee continued to function for a few years.<sup>1</sup>

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1. A.N. Pelzer, op.cit., p. 155; Die Vaderland, 5 June 1951.  
For further information on the action committee see pp. 109-110, 146 below.



## CHAPTER III

THE STRUGGLE FOR CONTROL :  
 THE TRADE UNION MOVEMENT  
 UNDER SIEGE

A. Rival Trade Unionism

With the exception of the Spoorbond the Afrikaner nationalists failed to achieve any significant successes in their attempts to establish trade unions.<sup>1</sup> For example, the N.R.T.'s attempt to establish a rival trade union for the underground miners on the Witwatersrand at the close of 1936 was stymied within a few months by a closed shop agreement between the Gold Producers' Committee of the Chamber of Mines and the registered trade unions which had members in the industry (i.e., the three mining workers' trade unions and craft unions such as the A.E.U., the A.S.W. and the I.M.S.)<sup>2</sup>

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1. It should be noted that the trade union established with Afrikaner nationalist support in the Witwatersrand leather industry during the mid-1950's was no exception to the above statement. The break-away leather workers' union had 321 members at the time of its registration in early 1954. Its registration was set aside by the Supreme Court in late 1955 on an application by the Transvaal Leather and Allied Trades Industrial Union. Judgment of Nesor J., delivered 29 November 1955, Transvaal Leather and Allied Trades Industrial Union vs. B.J. Schoeman and Another, W.L.D., pp. 2, 4, 20, op.cit.
  2. The Indicator, May 1937., For an account of the N.R.T.'s trade union see L. Naude, op.cit., pp. 32-51.

The N.R.T.'s trade union, the Afrikanerbond van Mynwerkers, enrolled many members during its short existence. However, no attempt was made to collect membership dues and a constitution was never formally adopted.<sup>1</sup>

The N.P.'s B.W.F., which it will be recalled was established in 1944, generally engaged in organisational activity against trade unions such as the A.S.W., the B.W.I.U., the G.W.U., the N.U.D.W. and the Textile Workers' Industrial Union. Although the B.W.F. was active in Oudtshoorn, Bloemfontein and Cape Town, it concentrated its attention on the workers in the 'rural' areas of the Western Cape. It often - but not always - capitalised on its organisational successes by establishing small trade unions.<sup>2</sup> The B.W.F. faded from the scene after the N.P. secured victory in the 1948 general election.<sup>3</sup>

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1. S.J. De Wet's evidence. Box vol.2, file vol.12, 18 November 1940, pp. 806, 808, in "Proceedings of the Mine Workers' Union Commission of Enquiry". Transvaal Archives; L. Naudé, op.cit., p. 35.
  2. B.M. Touyz, op.cit., pp. 82, 84-86; Minutes of A.S.W. Special E.C. Meeting, 1 August 1944, op.cit.; B.W.I.U. Circular to All Branches, 25 February 1948, Organisers' Annual Reports. J.D. Morton's, O.F.S. Organiser, Annual Report for 1947. T.U.C.S.A. Archives, DA 5-3; B.W.I.U. Circular to All Branches, 6 March 1950, Organisers' Annual Reports. J.D. Morton's, O.F.S. Organiser, Annual Report for 1949. A.U. of B.T.W. of S.A. Archives; Minutes of B.W.I.U. Joint Organising and Sub-Committees Meeting, 19 February 1948. T.U.C.S.A. Archives, DA 5-3; Minutes of N.U.D.W.N.E.C. Meeting, 24-25 November 1945, 21 July 1946, 17 January 1947, 23-24 August 1947, 22-23 November 1947, 25 April 1948. N.U.D.W. Archives; Minutes of T. & L.C.N.E.C. Meeting, 15 August 1944. T.U.C.S.A. Archives; Minutes of T. & L.C.W.P.L.C. Adjourned Management Committee Meeting, 12 April 1948. T.U.C.S.A. Archives.
  3. B.M. Touyz, op.cit., p. 86.

It would appear that a solid majority of the white workers on the railways during the early 1930's were Afrikaners. A large number of Afrikaners were employed as labourers on the railways in furtherance of the state's "civilised labour policy".<sup>1</sup>

A countrywide railway industrial union (i.e., including all work categories from unskilled labourer to clerical staff), the Spoorbond, was established in late 1933 by a founder of the A.B., H. Klopper (a railway official).<sup>2</sup> The Spoorbond manipulated real or imagined grievances among the clerical and manual workers by alleging, inter alia, that the "civilised labour policy" was being relaxed.<sup>3</sup>

The Spoorbond achieved substantial success in its organisational struggles against the other railway workers' societies. In 1936 it absorbed the National Union of Railway and Harbour Servants.<sup>4</sup> It would appear that by late 1941 the Spoorbond's membership had reached approximately 27 400.<sup>5</sup>

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1. D. O'Meara, "Assault on White Trade Unionism in S.A.", op.cit., p. 65; Die Skakel, 1933-1935.

2. Die Skakel, December 1933; D. O'Meara, "Assault on White Trade Unionism in S.A.", op.cit., p. 65.

3. See Die Skakel, 1933-1941.

4. The Spoorbond did not, of course, enrol non-whites as members and the non-white members of the National Union of Railway and Harbour Servants were simply excluded and left to fend for themselves. For footnote and text see F.J. Opperman, op.cit., p. 25.

5. Die Skakel, October 1941.

The other railway workers' societies naturally objected to the Spoorbond's 'poaching' of their members.<sup>1</sup> In addition, problems arose over which societies were entitled to represent the different grades of workers before the railway administration. The last few years of the 1930's witnessed the emergence of a railway administration proposal to demarcate the specific sectors of workers which the various railway societies would represent.<sup>2</sup>

A factor which undoubtedly influenced the U.P. government's view on the demarcation issue was its dissatisfaction over the Spoorbond's general political activities.<sup>3</sup> Indeed, the Spoorbond had its stop order facilities with the railway administration withdrawn for a short period in 1938.<sup>4</sup>

The demarcation scheme was finally introduced in 1941. The Spoorbond declined to forfeit sections of its membership and preferred to have its recognition withdrawn by the railway administration. The Spoorbond's membership was to have been restricted to the lower grades of workers.<sup>5</sup> Its membership steadily dwindled over the following years.<sup>6</sup>

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1. Minutes of T. & L.C.N.E.C. Meeting, 12 July 1938, op.cit.; The S.A. Railways, Airways and Harbours Artisan Staff Magazine, December 1935, January 1941; The Salstaff Bulletin, May 1941; Die Skakel, February 1940.
  2. Die Skakel, February 1938, March 1938, April 1938, September 1938, April 1940.
  3. Hansard, Assembly Debates, vol.31: 23 February 1938, cols. 465-466; 28 February 1938, cols. 668-669; 1 March 1938, cols. 741-743; 4 March 1938, cols. 1004-1005.
  4. Die Skakel, March 1938, April 1938.
  5. Ibid., July 1941, October 1941, November 1941, December 1941.
  6. Ibid., February 1944, March 1944.

(Davies and O'Meara incorrectly state that the Spoorbond was recognised by the railway administration for the first time in 1942).<sup>1</sup> The Spoorbond gave up its industrial character in 1949 and formally took over the representation of a section of the railway workers.<sup>2</sup>

Finally, it should be noted that by the close of the 1940's the Pretoria-based South African Iron, Steel and Kindred Trades Association had extended its jurisdiction to Germiston, Vereeniging and Rustenburg.<sup>3</sup> The Afrikaner nationalists interested themselves in the Association over the years and it would appear that the Association came increasingly under the direction of Afrikaner nationalist-oriented members (although the Association was affiliated to the T. & L.C. during the mid-1940's).<sup>4</sup> The Association attempted on occasion to 'poach' members from other engineering trade unions such as the A.E.U.<sup>5</sup>

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1. R.H. Davies, Capital, State and White Labour in S.A. 1900-1960, op.cit., p. 299; D. O'Meara "Assault on White Trade Unionism in S.A.", op.cit., p. 65.
  2. Jas. A. Adam, Wheels within Wheels and Trade Unionism on the S.A.R. & H., pp. 103-104, 129; Die Skakel, March 1950.
  3. The Sunday Times, 30 October 1949.
  4. B.M. Touyz, op.cit., pp. 80-81, 86; Informal interview with a former Witwatersrand branch secretary of the A.E.U., Johannesburg, 21 July 1980.
  5. Informal interview with a former Witwatersrand branch secretary of the A.E.U., op.cit.; A.E.U.M.R., May 1945.

B. Burrowing from Within : Afrikaner  
Nationalist Factional Activity

1. Trade Unions with Simple  
Constitutional Structures

(I) The Johannesburg Municipal Transport Workers' Union

Membership characteristics

The J.M.T.W.U. enrolled only the white transport workers employed by the Johannesburg municipality (i.e., essentially bus, tram and lorry-drivers, and conductors). The Union, which enjoyed a closed shop agreement and stop order facilities, had 1 769 members in 1948.<sup>1</sup> If one assumes that the ethnic composition of the Union's large executive council broadly reflected the character of the membership, then it can be stated that by the close of the 1930's the Afrikaner members comprised a solid majority of the membership. The English-speaking members comprised a small minority of the membership during the 1940's and early 1950's.<sup>2</sup>

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1. J.M.T.W.U. Annual Report, 1947-1948 (n.d.), op.cit.

2. Minutes of J.M.T.W.U.E.C. Meeting, 1934-1955. J.M.T.W.U. Archives.

### System of government

The Union's structures comprised a general meeting (each meeting had two sessions as the members worked on shifts), an executive council, a full-time general secretary and decision-taking by referendum (e.g., any expulsion from the Union was determined by a referendum). The ordinary executive council members, the office bearers and the general secretary were elected by means of a ballot of the membership. While the general secretary became a permanent official, the executive council members were subject to annual elections.<sup>1</sup>

### The top officials and the J.M.T.W.U.'s general policy

The two leading personalities in the J.M.T.W.U. were W. Riley, the English-speaking general secretary (1934-1949), and J.J. Venter, an Afrikaner, who served in a number of positions over the years (e.g., lay president, 1934-1946; full-time president, 1947-1949; and general secretary, 1950-1953).<sup>2</sup>

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1. The constitutional provisions are derived from a general study of the Union's Archives. See the J.M.T.W.U. Archives generally.
  2. W. Riley, General Secretary, "Conditions of Service - the J.M.T.W.U.", March 1946. T.U.C.S.A. Archives, DD 17-45; Minutes of J.M.T.W.U. Emergency E.C. Meeting, 24 June 1949, op.cit.; Minutes of J.M.T.W.U. G.C. Meeting, 6 February 1950, 17 December 1953, op.cit.; Minutes of J.M.T.W.U. Special G.C. Meeting, 12 September 1949, op.cit.

Riley and Venter can be classified as centrists in the white labour movement and Riley represented the L.P. on the Johannesburg city council for approximately a decade. Venter was further to the left than Riley - i.e., in relation to an aggressive industrial policy and 'social democratic' ideology rather than to racial issues.<sup>1</sup>

Although slight in stature, Venter had a quick temper and an aggressive temperament. Nevertheless, he enjoyed widespread support among the members. He was the dominant personality in the leadership and shaped the Union's policy over the years.<sup>2</sup>

The J.M.T.W.U.'s policy remained largely unchanged during the period under review. The Union, for example, advocated a policy of equal pay for equal work as a means of preventing the Johannesburg city council from employing non-whites in the occupations performed by the Union's members (the Union was successful in this endeavour during the period under review).<sup>3</sup>

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1. See the J.M.T.W.U. and the T.U.C.S.A. Archives generally.

I use the term centrist to describe a nebulous group of trade unionists who, to at least some extent, supported a 'social democratic' ideology, leaned in favour of a fairly aggressive industrial policy and often - but certainly not always - advocated a relatively tolerant and 'soft' colour policy.

2. See the J.M.T.W.U. Archives generally; Informal interview, Johannesburg, 8 September 1980. For further information on Venter see pp. 83-91, 177, 184, 201, 226 below.

3. Minutes of J.M.T.W.U. G.C. Meeting, 4 May 1939, 9 May 1939, op.cit.; Minutes of J.M.T.W.U.E.C. Meeting, 23 February 1942, 13 December 1946, 8 April 1948, op.cit.



The J.M.T.W.U. during the 1930's and 1940's supported the admission of black trade unions to the T. & L.C. on the ground that it provided the means to "control" them;<sup>1</sup> and provided financial assistance to sympathetic candidates contesting Johannesburg city council elections (which usually meant the L.P.).<sup>2</sup>

The J.M.T.W.U. negotiated directly with the Johannesburg city council for industrial agreements, etc. The Union was relatively successful in obtaining gradual improvements in the wages and conditions of service of its members.<sup>3</sup>

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1. Minutes of J.M.T.W.U.E.C. Meeting, 21 March 1947, 17 April 1947, 8 April 1948, op.cit.; Minutes of J.M.T.W.U. Special G.C. Meeting, 25 April 1947, op.cit.
  2. Minutes of J.M.T.W.U.E.C. Meeting, 17 March 1937, 20 July 1938, 2 November 1938, 22 August 1939, 20 October 1939, 13 December 1945, op.cit.; Minutes of J.M.T.W.U. Special G.C. Meeting, 29 July 1937, 3 August 1937, op.cit.; Minutes of J.M.T.W.U. G.C. Meeting, 13 September 1945, op.cit.
  3. Minutes of J.M.T.W.U. Special Urgent G.C. Meeting, 7 June 1949, 22 October 1951, op.cit.; Minutes of J.M.T.W.U. G.C. Meeting, 29 May 1951, op.cit.; Minutes of J.M.T.W.U.E.C. Meeting, 1934-1954, op.cit.

### The struggle for control : (A) 1936-1939

The latter 1930's witnessed the emergence of sharp ideological cleavages among the members.<sup>1</sup> Venter and Riley consistently lectured both executive council and rank and file members on the dangers of fascism and christian-national trade unionism.<sup>2</sup>

The composition of the executive council during the latter 1930's reflected the ideological divisions among the members (i.e., while numerous executive council members held 'social democratic' views, others leaned towards fascism and/or christian-national trade unionism).<sup>3</sup> The tensions in the executive council were reflected in the following exchanges at an executive council meeting in April 1939:

Comrade Bauskin at this stage protested against the action of members of the committee in sending Swastikas to him across the table. He thought it grossly unfair to allow such things to happen in a Union executive meeting.

Comrade Toplis associated himself with Comrade Bauskin's protest which he wished to have recorded. The chairman [J.J. Venter] said he was astounded.

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1. Minutes of J.M.T.W.U. Special E.C. Meeting, 19 May 1938, op.cit.; Minutes of J.M.T.W.U. G.C. Meeting, 20 May 1938, 9 May 1939, op.cit.; Minutes of J.M.T.W.U.E.C. Meeting, 20 April 1939, 12 May 1939, 21 June 1939, op.cit.
  2. Minutes of J.M.T.W.U. G.C. Meeting, 20 May 1938, 4 May 1939, 9 May 1939, op.cit.; Minutes of J.M.T.W.U.E.C. Meeting, 20 April 1939, 17 June 1939, 21 June 1939, op.cit.
  3. See Minutes of J.M.T.W.U.E.C. Meeting, 1934-1940, op.cit.

that members of this executive committee who professed to be democrats, should indulge in such foolish actions as to present Swastikas to members particularly when the member is of the Jewish faith. ...one thing cannot be tolerated in the trade union movement and that is a racial division [among whites] .

Comrade Theron said we should not have Anti-Nazi literature on the table as he felt every member had the right to his own views on this subject.

The secretary said...that he thought it was his duty to warn members that the Nazi regime had crushed trade unionism overseas and would do so in our own land if we did not stamp it out immediately. Members can hardly appreciate the danger they are placing their wives and families in by allowing themselves to be drawn into a movement which is out to destroy the very class we are supposed to represent.<sup>1</sup>

Although a few Afrikaner members appealed for ethnic-solidarity in the mid-1939 executive council election, the ethnic and ideological character of the new executive differed very little from its predecessor.<sup>2</sup>

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1. Ibid., 20 April 1939.

2. Ibid., 12 May 1939, 21 June 1939, 12 July 1939. There is no evidence of an Afrikaner nationalist faction in the J.M.T.W.U. in mid-1939. However, it is worth noting that the Motor Transport Workers' Union (Witwatersrand and Pretoria) reported to the T. & L.C. in mid-1939 that an Afrikaner nationalist faction was attempting to gain control of their Union. Minutes of T. & L.C.N.E.C. Meeting, 11 July 1939, op.cit.

### The struggle for control : (B) 1939-1945

The enlistment of numerous members for active service weakened the 'social democratic' element in the Union (among those who enlisted were four executive council members who leaned in favour of a 'social democratic' ideology).<sup>1</sup> The Union's members were deeply divided over the war issue.<sup>2</sup>

The J.M.T.W.U. seldom mandated its delegates to the T. & L.C. conferences.<sup>3</sup> The Union's two delegates to the March 1940 conference, Venter and Riley, differed over the G.W.U.'s anti-war resolution which was based on the leftist rationale. In contrast to Venter, Riley opposed the motion and supported South Africa's participation in the war on Britain's side (the vote was by means of a show of hands).<sup>4</sup>

Mr. W. Riley spoke against the motion. Much had been said about British Imperialism, but he wanted to say that they in South Africa could elect tomorrow, if they wished, a Government which could declare the country a Republic,

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1. Minutes of J.M.T.W.U.E.C. Meeting, 11 April 1940, 13 June 1940, op.cit.; Minutes of J.M.T.W.U. Adjourned G.C. Meeting, 24 July 1941, op.cit.
  2. Minutes of J.M.T.W.U. G.C. Meeting, 16 May 1940, 6 March 1941, op.cit.; Minutes of J.M.T.W.U. Special E.C. Meeting, 5 June 1941, op.cit.; Minutes of J.M.T.W.U.E.C. Meeting, 15 January 1941, 14 February 1941, 7 December 1942, op.cit.
  3. Minutes of J.M.T.W.U.E.C. Meeting, 1934-1954, op.cit. Very few trade unions regularly mandated their delegates to the T. & L.C. conferences. This information is derived from trade union minutes and journals. See the Selected Bibliography below.
  4. Minutes of the Annual Conference of the T. & L.C., Cape Town, 25, 26, 27, 28, 29 March 1940, pp. 67-68, 78-79, 84, 88, op.cit.

with only a two-thirds majority. ...there was a vast difference between that and [Nazi Germany] where the workers had not even the rights [of] ...the native workers of South Africa.]

Mr. J.J. Venter said that he was in favour of the motion. ...[during the Anglo-Boer War] many people in Britain were sympathetic to the Boer's cause and against the military campaign, but [the war] was the work of the London financiers - just as it is today. ...messers Caddy [the general secretary of the South African Boiler-makers', Ironworkers' and Shipbuilders' Society] and Downes [the general secretary of the S.A.T.U.] with their foreign views [ "uitlandse sienswyse" ], knew nothing of the Afrikaner spirit among the workers. ...it is an imperialist war and it is not concerned with the [welfare of the] workers. Overseas affairs have nothing to do with us.<sup>2</sup> [My translation.]

The J.M.T.W.U. generally attempted to adopt a neutral and balanced policy on war related issues. Thus, on the one hand, in late 1940 the J.M.T.W.U. organised a collection for a union member of German descent, Krambeck, who had been interned under the emergency war regulations;<sup>3</sup> and in early 1941 the J.M.T.W.U. brought pressure to bear on the tramway department not to allow a union member, Lieb, to drive a tram until he agreed not to wear his pro-war badge while on duty.<sup>4</sup> On the other hand, Venter strenuously opposed an Afrikaner nationalist faction's attempt

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1. Ibid., p. 78.

2. Ibid., p. 84. For further information on the G.W.U.'s war motion see pp. 97, 188 below.

3. Minutes of J.M.T.W.U.E.C. Meeting, 15 January 1941, op.cit.

4. Minutes of J.M.T.W.U. G.C. Meeting, 6 March 1941, op.cit.

during 1941 to have the union members who were on active service excluded from certain of the J.M.T.W.U.'s benefits (the issue is discussed below).

The Afrikaner nationalists engaged in factional activities in the Union during the early years of the war. Although I have no hard evidence it would appear that both the N.R.T. and the O.B. were active among the members.<sup>1</sup> There were certainly a few outspoken O.B. sympathisers on the executive council during this period.<sup>2</sup>

The Afrikaner nationalists played on the ideological divisions among the members. Thus, for example, in 1941 an Afrikaner nationalist faction engaged in a campaign to have the members on active service excluded from the Union's death benefits<sup>3</sup> (the members on active service remained nominally in the employ of the city council and received an allowance in lieu of wages).<sup>4</sup> When the motion was finally moved at a general meeting in mid-1941 Venter simply refused to allow the issue to be put to a vote. He argued that the exclusion of the members on active service from the death benefits would vitally affect the closed shop provision

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1. B.M. Touyz, op.cit., p. 80; Minutes of J.M.T.W.U.E.C. Meeting, 28 February 1941, 26 October 1942, 15 April 1943, op.cit.; Minutes of J.M.T.W.U. Special Urgent E.C. Meeting, 15 May 1941, op.cit.; Minutes of J.M.T.W.U. Special E.C. Meeting, 20 May 1941, 5 June 1941, 3 July 1941, op.cit.

2. Minutes of J.M.T.W.U.E.C. Meeting, 17 February 1942, op.cit.; Minutes of J.M.T.W.U. Special E.C. Meeting, 23 February 1942, op.cit.

3. Minutes of J.M.T.W.U. Special Urgent E.C. Meeting, 15 May 1941, op.cit.; Minutes of J.M.T.W.U. Special E.C. Meeting, 20 May 1941, 5 June 1941, op.cit.

4. Minutes of J.M.T.W.U. G.C. Meeting, 6 January 1942, op.cit.

and that it was inequitable to decide an issue in the absence of those most deeply affected by the proposal.<sup>1</sup>

The Afrikaner nationalists also organised 'tickets' for the various J.M.T.W.U. elections and achieved a fair degree of success in their endeavours. However, Venter was usually, if not always, returned unopposed to his post.<sup>2</sup>

By the mid-1940's the Afrikaner nationalist-inspired intrigues in the J.M.T.W.U. had largely subsided. By this stage the executive council had a large number of 'right-wing' members (i.e., a nebulous group of Afrikaner nationalists and others who held extreme racist views, displayed little militancy in industrial matters and were opposed to the Union's linkages with the L.P. and the T. & L.C.). However, a number of these 'right-wing' executive councillors remained loyal to the Venter leadership. They appreciated, inter alia, that there was no one suitably equipped to replace either Venter or Riley in the Union's hierarchy.<sup>3</sup>

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1. Minutes of J.M.T.W.U. Adjourned G.C. Meeting, 24 July 1941, op.cit.  
A number of trade unions such as the A.S.W. and the S.A.T.U. organised referenda on the question of benefits for members on active service. S.A.T.J., June 1940, October 1940, March 1941; A.S.W.M.R., October 1942.
  2. Minutes of J.M.T.W.U. Special E.C. Meeting, 3 July 1941, op.cit.; Minutes of J.M.T.W.U.E.C. Meeting, 1939-1944, op.cit.
  3. Minutes of J.M.T.W.U.E.C. Meeting, 1944-1947, op.cit.

### The struggle for control : (C) 1945-1954

Little, if any, disruptive activity occurred in the J.M.T.W.U. for much of the second half of the 1940's.<sup>1</sup> However, by the close of the decade the J.M.T.W.U. was being buffeted by Afrikaner nationalist-inspired intrigues against the Venter administration. It is unclear whether the dissidents had any formal linkages with Afrikaner nationalist organisations. The dissidents obtained legal assistance from A. Hertzog and O. Pirow (a neo-fascist Afrikaner nationalist and a former U.P. government cabinet minister until the close of 1939).<sup>2</sup>

Although they engaged in a number of election campaigns from the close of the 1940's, the Afrikaner nationalists achieved little success in their endeavours to dislodge Venter loyalists from the executive council.<sup>3</sup> The Afrikaner nationalists also engaged in a campaign to discredit Venter among the membership. For example, references were made to Venter's marriage in 1944 to the "communist" president of the G.W.U., A. Scheepers.<sup>4</sup>

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1. Ibid., 1945-1950.

2. Ibid., 4 July 1949, 9 February 1951, 10 May 1951, 10 July 1952; Minutes of J.M.T.W.U. Special E.C. Meeting, 30 May 1949, 24 March 1950, op.cit.; Minutes of J.M.T.W.U. G.C. Meeting, 17 May 1949, 6 February 1950, op.cit.; Minutes of J.M.T.W.U. Special Urgent G.C. Meeting, 7 June 1949, 26 June 1952, op.cit.; Minutes of J.M.T.W.U. Urgent G.C. Meeting, 22 June 1950, op.cit.

3. Minutes of J.M.T.W.U.E.C. Meeting, 1949-1954, op.cit.; Minutes of J.M.T.W.U. Special G.C. Meeting, 21 June 1949, 12 September 1949, op.cit.; Judgment of Roper J., J.J. Venter vs. Dr. W. Wilcocks, Die Afrikaanse Pers Beperk and the Central News Agency Ltd., W.L.D., 1950, pp. 1-3. G.W.U. Archives, BCC 3-1.

4. Minutes of J.M.T.W.U. Special E.C. Meeting, 10 May 1944, op.cit.; Minutes of J.M.T.W.U. Urgent G.C. Meeting, 22 June 1950, op.cit.



The Afrikaner nationalists tried various stratagems to remove Venter from his post. Venter served for a short period in 1949 as the J.M.T.W.U.'s technical adviser-cum-organiser after the Afrikaner nationalists had ascertained that the Union's registered constitution made no provision for a full-time president.<sup>1</sup> Riley died in 1949 and Venter was elected unopposed as general secretary in early 1950.<sup>2</sup>

The J.M.T.W.U.'s membership drifted increasingly to the right over the years and by the early 1950's Venter had begun to soften his criticisms at Union general meetings and executive council meetings on issues such as the Suppression of Communism Act of 1950.<sup>3</sup> It must be emphasised that Venter had not changed his views and he continued to castigate the N.P. government for its repressive legislation at T. & L.C. conferences, etc.<sup>4</sup>

Venter stood firm on the question of the J.M.T.W.U.'s affiliation to the T. & L.C. and, with the support of a relatively small number of executive councillors,

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1. Minutes of J.M.T.W.U. Special E.C. Meeting, 30 May 1949, op.cit.; Minutes of J.M.T.W.U. Special Urgent G.C. Meeting, 7 June 1949, op.cit. Venter was elected a full-time president in 1947 after he had been "boarded" by the city council (i.e., declared medically unfit and unable to continue his employment as a driver). Minutes of J.M.T.W.U.E.C. Meeting, 1946-1947, op.cit.
  2. Minutes of J.M.T.W.U. G.C. Meeting, 6 February 1950, op.cit.
  3. Compare Venter's speeches on the Suppression of Communism Act at a 1950 and 1952 general meeting. Minutes of J.M.T.W.U. G.C. Meeting, 30 May 1950, 29 May 1952, op.cit.
  4. Minutes of the Annual Conference of the T. & L.C.: Cape Town, 16, 17, 18, 19 July 1951, pp. 1, 4-5, 29-30; Durban, 21, 22, 23, 24 April 1952, pp. 3-4; Port Elizabeth, 30, 31 March, 1, 2 April 1953, pp. 1-3, op.cit.

kept the Union affiliated to the T. & L.C. from 1948 by the sheer force of his own influence in the Union (a major grievance of many executive council members was the presence of black delegates at T. & L.C. conferences).<sup>1</sup>

In mid-1952 Venter organised a referendum to ascertain whether he retained the confidence of the membership (a considerable portion of the discontent was over the Union's continued affiliation to the T. & L.C.).<sup>2</sup>

Venter received an overwhelming mandate from the members (975 votes to 122).<sup>3</sup> He died at the close of 1953.<sup>4</sup>

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1. Minutes of J.M.T.W.U.E.C. Meeting, 8 April 1948, 24 February 1949, 25 April 1950, 15 May 1952, 21 April 1953, op.cit.; Minutes of J.M.T.W.U. G.C. Meeting, 17 May 1949, 30 May 1950, 29 May 1952, op.cit.; Minutes of J.M.T.W.U. Special Urgent G.C. Meeting, 7 June 1949, 26 June 1952, op.cit.; Minutes of T. & L.C.N.E.C. Meeting, 1948-1954, op.cit.; Minutes of T. & L.C.S.T.L.C.E.C. Meeting, 1948-1954. T.U.C.S.A. Archives.
  2. Minutes of J.M.T.W.U. G.C. Meeting, 29 May 1952, op.cit.; Minutes of J.M.T.W.U. Special E.C. Meeting, 2 June 1952, op.cit.
  3. Minutes of J.M.T.W.U. Special Urgent G.C. Meeting, 26 June 1952, op.cit.
  4. Minutes of J.M.T.W.U. E.C. Meeting, 6 October 1953, op.cit.

(II) The Garment Workers' Union

Membership characteristics

The Johannesburg-based G.W.U. had numerous small branches scattered throughout much of the country. The Union enrolled white and non-white manual workers as members.<sup>1</sup> The G.W.U. had 14 156 members in 1946.<sup>2</sup>

The Witwatersrand clothing manufacturing industry during the period under review was concentrated in Johannesburg and Germiston<sup>3</sup> (a branch of the Union was established in Germiston in 1928).<sup>4</sup> In 1936 88,7 per cent of the Witwatersrand industry's workforce was white, in 1946 54 per cent and in 1955 only 32,6 per cent.<sup>5</sup> The bulk of the white workers consisted of Afrikaner females.<sup>6</sup> The number of white females employed in the Witwatersrand industry was 5 174 in 1936 and 7 801 in 1952.<sup>7</sup>

During the 1930's the G.W.U.'s Witwatersrand membership was almost exclusively white (although the Union established a segregated branch for the Coloured garment workers in the

1. B.M. Touyz, op.cit., pp. 8-10, 20-35.
2. E.S. Sachs, General Secretary, G.W.U. to Secretary, T. & L.C., 17 January 1947. T.U.C.S.A. Archives, DA 7-1.
3. H.A.F. Barker, The Economics of the Wholesale Clothing Industry of South Africa 1907-1957, p. 101 table XI.
4. B.M. Touyz, op.cit., p. 41.
5. Ibid., p. 11 table 3.
6. Ibid., p. 22.
7. Ibid., p. 79.

mid-1930's it would appear that the branch never really got off the ground).<sup>1</sup> The G.W.U. enrolled all the eligible non-white workers on the Witwatersrand during the 1940's (i.e., Coloureds, Indians and black females).<sup>2</sup> The Union enjoyed a closed shop agreement and stop order facilities in the Witwatersrand industry (the agreement presumably applied only to the white workers during the 1930's).<sup>3</sup>

#### System of government

In terms of the G.W.U.'s 1937 constitution the Union's executive council, full-time president and full-time general secretary were elected at Johannesburg general meetings. The president, the general secretary and the executive council members were subject to periodic elections.<sup>4</sup> The executive council enjoyed considerable authority and had the power, inter alia, to appoint the organisers, dissolve branches and expel members.<sup>5</sup>

Johannesburg general meetings were, however, the final arbiter of Union affairs.<sup>6</sup> All affiliations and Witwatersrand industrial agreements had to be approved by

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1. Ibid., pp. 26-27.

2. Ibid., pp. 28, 31-32.

3. Ibid., pp. 23-24.

4. G.W.U. Constitution (n.d.), secs. 6(B), 8(E). G.W.U. Archives.

5. Ibid., secs. 7, 11(B).

6. Ibid., sec. 6(A).

a Johannesburg general meeting.<sup>1</sup> Although the constitution was slightly ambiguous it would appear that all Union members were entitled to attend Johannesburg general meetings.<sup>2</sup>

During the 1940's and early 1950's the G.W.U. enrolled the eligible non-white workers on the Witwatersrand into a segregated branch, the number two branch.<sup>3</sup> While the G.W.U. made no move to amend its constitution, it restricted the non-white members to activity within their branch and control of the Union remained exclusively in the hands of the white members.<sup>4</sup>

The G.W.U.'s 1953 constitution made provision for a representative system of government, which effectively enfranchised all the Union's members.<sup>5</sup>

#### The top officials

The dominant figure in the G.W.U. was E.S. Sachs, the left-wing general secretary (1928-1952). Sachs, who had never been employed in the clothing industry, was first elected

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1. Ibid., secs. 15(A), 21.
  2. B.M. Touyz, op.cit., pp. 28-29.
  3. Ibid., pp. 28, 31-32, 35.
  4. Ibid., p. 28.
  5. Ibid., p. 34.

to his post at a time when the Union was dominated by immigrant tailors. Like many of the craftsmen, Sachs was a Jewish immigrant from Eastern Europe.<sup>1</sup>

In 1934 the tailoring section of the G.W.U. withdrew from the Union with an agreed portion of the funds and established an independent trade union, the Tailoring Workers' Industrial Union. Sachs remained general secretary of the G.W.U.<sup>2</sup>

Thus the mid-1930's witnessed the emergence of the G.W.U.'s cadre; and there is evidence that Sachs promoted the cause of emerging union leaders who held left-wing views. With the exception of Sachs the cadre members were young left-leaning Afrikaner females. The cadre members included A. Scheepers (the full-time president), J. Cornelius (the national organiser) and her sister, H. Cornelius (the Germiston branch secretary and the co-editor with Sachs of the G.W.U.'s journal). J. Cornelius first rose to prominence in the G.W.U. after having been arrested while on picket duty during the 1932 general strike in the Witwatersrand clothing manufacturing industry.<sup>3</sup>

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1. Ibid., pp. 15-16, 166-167, 170, 220. Sachs was expelled from the Communist Party in 1931 for engaging in "reformist" trade union activity. Umsebenzi, 4 September 1931.
  2. B.M. Touyz, op.cit., pp. 8, 23-24.
  3. Ibid., pp. 36-39, 114 footnote 2; The Garment Worker/Die Klere-werker, October 1936.

While Sachs shaped the Union's policy he was certainly no autocrat. Executive members in general and cadre members in particular on a few occasions challenged Sachs at executive council meetings even on relatively insignificant issues; acrimonious exchanges occurred between Sachs and other cadre members.<sup>1</sup>

#### Some policy considerations and activity

The G.W.U.'s journal, The Garment Worker/Die Klerewerker, particularly up to 1945, lauded the Soviet Union and propagated communism. However, the journal paradoxically declined to endorse multi-racialism; it supported white class political organisations and favoured sectional and parallel trade unionism. Sachs guided the G.W.U. into active participation in white class politics (e.g., the G.W.U. established the Independent Labour Party in 1943 and the Union affiliated to the L.P. in 1947).<sup>2</sup>

The G.W.U. held political training classes at least during 1935. The Cornelius sisters gave a number of lectures based on Leontiev's Political Economy at the close of the

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1. B.M. Touyz, op.cit., p. 39.

2. Ibid., pp. 38-39. For further information on the Independent Labour Party see p. 287 below.

1930's.<sup>1</sup> It should also be noted that the G.W.U. provided financial assistance to the struggling Native Clothing Workers' Union during the mid-1930's.<sup>2</sup>

The G.W.U.'s anti-war resolution for the 1940 T. & L.C. conference was drafted by Sachs and endorsed by the Union's executive council.<sup>3</sup> The G.W.U. came out in full support of the war effort after Hitler invaded the Soviet Union in 1941.<sup>4</sup> The G.W.U.'s war policies caused a degree of discontent among the Union's general membership.<sup>5</sup>

#### Economic considerations

Most of the large trade unions such as the A.S.W. and the S.A.T.U. put up feeble resistance to the wage cuts in their industries during the depression years of the early 1930's and instead focused their attention on providing unemployment benefits for their members.<sup>6</sup> The G.W.U.'s members employed in the Witwatersrand clothing manufacturing industry engaged in two large-scale strikes in 1931 and 1932 in

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1. B.M. Touyz, op.cit., p. 38.

2. Ibid., pp. 24-25.

3. Minutes of G.W.U.C.E.C. Meeting, 13 December 1939. G.W.U. Archives.

4. Minutes of G.W.U. Special General Meeting, 26 June 1941, op.cit.

5. Minutes of G.W.U.C.E.C. Meeting, 21 February 1940, 28 February 1940, 3 April 1940, 17 April 1940, 3 July 1940, op.cit.; Minutes of G.W.U. C.E.C. Meeting, 8 July 1941. Exhibit in "E.S. Sachs vs. Voortrekkerspers Bpk." Court record no.: W.L.D. (Trial) 107 of 1942.

6. Minutes of A.S.W.E.C. Meeting, 1930-1934, op.cit.; S.A.T.J., January 1932, July 1933.



an attempt to prevent the employers from cutting the wage rates in their industry. The 1932 strike ended in failure.<sup>1</sup>

The G.W.U. negotiated directly with the Transvaal Clothing Manufacturers' Association for industrial agreements. The G.W.U. obtained gradual improvements in the wages and conditions of service of its members during the second half of the 1930's. The Union obtained substantial increases in the wages, etc., of its members during the 1940's and early 1950's.<sup>2</sup>

#### The struggle for control : (A) 1936-1939

The Afrikaner nationalists interested themselves in the G.W.U. from the mid-1930's. The N.R.T., inter alia, engaged in propaganda campaigns against the Sachs leadership (e.g., references were made to communist influences in the G.W.U. and to the Union's failure to enforce segregation at its offices and in the clothing factories);<sup>3</sup> attempted to recruit prominent figures in the Union to their cause;<sup>4</sup> and established a faction in the Union in 1938.<sup>5</sup>

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1. B.M. Touyz, op.cit., pp. 57-64. For information on the 1932 strike see p.171 footnote 1 below.
  2. B.M. Touyz, op.cit., pp. 43-44.
  3. Ibid., pp. 103-105.
  4. Ibid., pp. 100, 105.
  5. Ibid., pp. 108-117.

In early 1939 the G.W.U. concluded an agreement with the N.R.T. that a motion of confidence in the Sachs leadership would be moved at a specially convened Johannesburg general meeting. Sachs and the N.R.T.'s chief full-time organiser among the garment workers, D.B.H. Grobbelaar, would be given an opportunity to address the meeting.<sup>1</sup>

The special general meeting, which was held in March 1939, was attended by well over two thousand, enthusiastically pro-Sachs, members. Sachs was the first speaker and he recalled how they had built up the G.W.U. and had struggled to obtain the existing wage rates and conditions of employment. Grobbelaar and his associates, on the other hand, were trying to break the trade union movement and had adopted a strategy of slander, lies, "racial hatred" and "Jew baiting". They drew their inspiration from Czarist Russia and Nazi Germany while he drew his inspiration from the contemporary Soviet Union.

Grobbelaar had spoken for only four of his allotted fifteen minutes when a large group of Germiston members with pro-Sachs banners arrived at the meeting. Their

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1. Ibid., pp. 112-113.

arrival caused such a favourable commotion among the audience that Grobbelaar was unable to continue his address. The ballot papers were distributed in a disorderly manner and the motion was put to a hand vote. Grobbelaar received no more than twenty votes.<sup>1</sup>

The G.W.U.'s leadership in fact remained on the offensive against the christian-national trade unionists during the second half of the 1930's. The Union played the Afrikaner nationalists at their own game and promoted Afrikaner culture and tradition within the ambit of the Union. For example, the G.W.U. organised a Kappie Kommando to participate in the various Voortrekker centenary celebrations in 1938.<sup>2</sup>

The G.W.U. also turned Afrikaner nationalist propaganda and policies into a weapon against the christian-national trade unionists. Thus, for instance, in mid-1937 L. Cronje, the chairman of the N.R.T.'s Afrikanerbond van Mynwerkers, and P.J. Kock, the organising-secretary of the Spoorbond, made speeches which reflected adversely on the Afrikaner females employed in the industrial sector on the Witwatersrand. Very broadly, a basic thrust of the speeches was

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1. Ibid., pp. 114-115. It should be noted that G.W.U. Medical Aid Society cards had to be produced to gain admission to important Johannesburg general meetings. G.W.U. circular, 21 February 1939, signed by A. Scheepers and J. Cornelius. G.W.U. Archives; Report of the Garment Workers' Union Commission of Enquiry, par. 194. U.G. 16 1950.

2. B.M. Touyz, op.cit., pp. 108-111.

that white girls employed in the industrial sector on the Witwatersrand were dancing with blacks.<sup>1</sup>

The speeches caused much anger among the garment workers and the G.W.U. did not scruple to play on the racial prejudices of its members. The Union organised a number of meetings at which Kock's and Cronje's statements were denied and denounced.<sup>2</sup>

#### The struggle for control : (B) 1940-1946

We have already noted that during the war years a large number of Coloureds were absorbed into the Witwatersrand clothing manufacturing industry.<sup>3</sup> More specifically, the Coloured workers were essentially drawn into the Johannesburg industry and were generally employed in the same occupations as their white colleagues (i.e., mainly as machinists). However, no Coloureds were employed as machinists in the Germiston industry.<sup>4</sup>

Many white workers were opposed to the influx of Coloureds into the industry and to the revival of the number two branch.

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1. Ibid., pp. 100-102.

2. Ibid., pp. 103-106.

3. See p. 35 above.

4. B.M. Touyz, op.cit., pp. 125-127.

By 1942 the G.W.U. was engaged in constant endeavours to persuade recalcitrant white workers to accept the employment of Coloureds in their respective factories.<sup>1</sup> It should be noted that the G.W.U. insisted that the Coloured workers be segregated from their white colleagues in the factories. In addition, from August 1941 factory inspectors could enforce segregation by means of a factory regulation. However, segregation was applied in the industry in a haphazard manner.<sup>2</sup>

With the approval of the G.W.U. the management of Germiston Clothing took the initiative in the Germiston industry and at the beginning of 1944 introduced a handful of Coloured machinists into the factory. Although the Coloured workers were completely segregated from their white colleagues, the white workers at the factory came out on strike over the move. The factory duly dismissed the Coloured machinists. The occupation of machinist remained the virtual preserve of white females in the Germiston industry until 1957.<sup>3</sup>

The Germiston branch executive committee of the G.W.U. (G.b.e.c.) expelled two members from the Union for playing leading roles in the strike and for abusing

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1. Ibid., pp. 125-126.

2. Ibid., p. 125.

3. Ibid., pp. 127-128.

the branch's leaders during the dispute. The G.b.e.c. anticipated a surge of discontent in the branch over the expulsions and postponed indefinitely the forthcoming branch election. The branch election was held only in early 1946.<sup>1</sup>

With the assistance of a lay Afrikaner nationalist activist (J. Du Pisanie), a number of Germiston clergymen established an action committee to co-ordinate opposition to the G.W.U. leadership.<sup>2</sup> The committee was subsequently extended to form the Breë Kerklike Komitee (B.K.K.). The B.K.K.'s members were drawn from the Witwatersrand and comprised Afrikaner clergymen and a few lay Afrikaner nationalist activists (e.g., B. Schoeman, the chairman of the N.P. on the Witwatersrand).<sup>3</sup> There are signs of intrigue between N.P. and O.B. sympathisers in the B.K.K.<sup>4</sup> The B.K.K. merged into the N.P.'s B.W.B.B. in April 1945.<sup>5</sup>

The B.K.K. stated that it opposed the employment of non-whites in operations performed by the white garment workers. It wished to transform the G.W.U. into a white garment workers' trade union free of communist influences.<sup>6</sup>

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1. Ibid., pp. 128-130, 137, 141.

2. Ibid., pp. 130-132. For further information on Du Pisanie see pp. 59 above and 322 below.

3. B.M. Touyz, op.cit., pp. 135-136.

4. Ibid., pp. 136, 139.

5. Ibid., p. 140.

6. Ibid., pp. 136-137.

During the first half of 1944 the action committee/B.K.K. distributed pamphlets and convened a number of mass meetings in Germiston;<sup>1</sup> and organised an unsuccessful go-slow strike in the Germiston industry as a means of obtaining the reinstatement of the two expelled members in their jobs (the two had been dismissed in compliance with the closed shop agreement).<sup>2</sup>

The G.W.U. responded to the unrest in Germiston by convening a special general meeting in Johannesburg for mid-March 1944. It announced that a motion of confidence in the Union's leadership would be moved at the meeting.<sup>3</sup>

The G.W.U. leadership sought to discourage the Germiston members from attending the meeting. The Union arranged with the Transvaal Clothing Manufacturers' Association that a member who left work early to attend the meeting would not forfeit a pro rata portion of her wage. However, the Germiston industry was excluded from the arrangement.<sup>4</sup>

Only a handful of Germiston members were present at the meeting which was attended by approximately four thousand members. Although the meeting was somewhat unruly a motion of confidence in the G.W.U. leadership was overwhelmingly passed.<sup>5</sup>

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1. Ibid., pp. 133-134.

2. Ibid., pp. 132-134.

3. Ibid., pp. 134-135.

4. Ibid.

5. Ibid., p. 135.

### The struggle for control : (C) 1946-1948

The full-time secretary of the Germiston branch was the left-leaning H. Cornelius, the sister of J. Cornelius.<sup>1</sup>

The long-serving H. Cornelius defeated her Afrikaner nationalist opponent in the 1946 branch election and was returned unopposed to her post in the 1947 and 1948 elections.<sup>2</sup> However, the G.b.e.c. leaned increasingly towards the Afrikaner nationalists as the decade progressed.<sup>3</sup>

Many Johannesburg members remained opposed to the employment of non-whites as machinists and to the establishment of the number two branch. Thus, for example, the audience enthusiastically supported a member at a Johannesburg general meeting in July 1948 who expressed the view that the Coloured and black workers should be removed from the industry. Sachs emphasised that he was not prepared to engage in "kaffer-koolie [i.e., racist] politics" and called for a vote of confidence in his leadership. The approximately three thousand strong audience overwhelmingly passed a motion of full confidence in the Sachs administration.<sup>4</sup>

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1. Ibid., pp. 37-38, 114 footnote 2.

2. Ibid., p. 114 footnote 2, pp. 141, 143-144.

3. A clear picture of the Germiston branch can be derived from the following sources: Minutes of G.W.U.G.B.E.C. Meeting, 1939-1940, 1943-1948. G.W.U. Archives; "Proceedings of the Garment Workers' Union Commission of Enquiry" (1948-1949). G.W.U. Archives; Court proceedings, E.S. Sachs vs. A.B. du Preez. Court record no.: W.L.D. (Trial) 1003 of 1945.

4. B.M. Touyz, op.cit., p. 147.



The Afrikaner nationalists continued to manipulate the above grievances among the members.<sup>1</sup> Shortly after the N.P.'s victory in the May 1948 general election the B.W.B.B. launched a campaign against the G.W.U. leadership. The B.W.B.B. obtained the covert assistance of the disgruntled vice-president of the G.W.U., G.H. Van der Walt. Van der Walt, who had been unemployed for some time, received a wage from the B.W.B.B.<sup>2</sup> He was exposed as an intriguer against the G.W.U. leadership and was duly expelled from the Union.<sup>3</sup>

The G.W.U. convened a general meeting at Johannesburg for September 1948. The meeting would, inter alia, consider a motion of confidence in the Union's leadership.<sup>4</sup>

The B.W.B.B. engaged in a campaign to mobilise its supporters and obtained the assistance of the long-serving chairman of the Germiston branch, K. Meyer.<sup>5</sup> The G.W.U. leadership viewed the B.W.B.B.'s efforts to mobilise the Germiston members with increasing concern. The Union distributed a pamphlet among the

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1. Ibid., pp. 144-145, 149.

2. Ibid., pp. 145-146.

3. Ibid., pp. 148, 150.

4. Ibid., p. 150.

5. Ibid., pp. 127, 142, 150-151.

the Germiston membership. The Germiston membership was cautioned against leaving work early to attend the meeting as no arrangements had been made with the Germiston manufacturers. The members were warned that a worker who left work early without her employer's permission faced severe penalties including summary dismissal from her job.<sup>1</sup>

Approximately two hundred Germiston members travelled to Johannesburg to attend the meeting (the railway administration had laid on a special train). However, when the Germiston members arrived at the hall they found the doors closed and were refused admission. The approximately three thousand members already in the hall overwhelmingly passed a motion of full confidence in the Sachs leadership. After the meeting limited clashes occurred between Sachs's supporters and opponents.<sup>2</sup>

The following day the G.W.U.'s executive council resolved to dissolve the G.b.e.c. A branch election was held only at the beginning of 1953.<sup>3</sup>

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1. Ibid., p. 151.

2. Ibid., pp. 152-154.

3. Ibid., pp. 33, 154. Minutes of G.W.U.C.E.C. Meeting, 1950-1953, op.cit.

### The struggle for control : (D) 1948-1954

A special Johannesburg general meeting in February 1950 empowered a national conference of branch delegates to amend the constitution. A number of conferences were held. The conferences were attended by delegates from most of the Union's branches (i.e., white, non-white and mixed). We have already noted that the new constitution was registered in early 1953.<sup>1</sup>

The N.P. government harassed the G.W.U. leadership. Thus, for example, it appointed a commission of enquiry into the G.W.U. after the September 1948 general meeting<sup>2</sup> and it used the Suppression of Communism Act to remove Sachs from his post in 1952. The G.W.U. organised a one day strike in protest against Sachs's "listing" under the Act. The strike brought the Johannesburg, Kimberley and Port Elizabeth clothing manufacturing industries to a halt. However, most of the Germiston factories remained open.<sup>3</sup>

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1. B.M. Touyz, op.cit., pp. 33-34. By the early 1950's the G.W.U.'s non-Transvaal membership, which had steadily increased over the years, was predominantly non-white. There were, of course, no mixed branches in the Transvaal. B.M. Touyz, op.cit., pp. 33, 118, 172-173, 175.
  2. B.M. Touyz, op.cit., pp. 155-157.
  3. Ibid., pp. 166, 169.

The Afrikaner nationalists continued their intrigues in the G.W.U.<sup>1</sup> The A.B.'s action committee was active among the garment workers during the early 1950's.<sup>2</sup> The committee contested the 1951 executive council election with little success.<sup>3</sup>

The G.W.U.'s 1953 election (i.e., for the posts of general secretary and president) was held in terms of the new constitution. No non-white candidates were nominated and the election was a straight contest between the incumbent officials (J. Cornelius, the acting general secretary; and A. Scheepers, the president) and their Afrikaner nationalist opponents (G.L.H. Van Niekerk and K. Meyer).<sup>4</sup>

The incumbent officials easily defeated their opponents. Scheepers and Cornelius obtained virtually all the non-white and non-Witwatersrand votes. However, the Afrikaner nationalists gained the support of a solid majority of the white Germiston members. While the white members might certainly have voted differently if their non-white colleagues had not been enfranchised, the election results indicate that the incumbent officials would have been hard

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1. Ibid., pp. 158-161.

2. Ibid., pp. 163-164, 170-171.

3. Ibid., pp. 164-165.

4. Ibid., pp. 173-174. For information on Meyer and Van Niekerk see pp. 72, 106 above.

pressed to defeat their Afrikaner nationalist opponents if the ballot had been restricted to the white members on the Witwatersrand.<sup>1</sup>

Finally, it should be noted that Davies, Hepple and O'Meara assumed either that the G.W.U. had no non-white members or that only the white members were enfranchised. Davies and Hepple cited the G.W.U.'s 1953 election results in support of their claims that the Afrikaner nationalists achieved limited success in their attempts to mobilise the Afrikaner garment workers behind their banner (O'Meara was probably misled by Hepple's account).<sup>2</sup>

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1. B.M. Touyz, *op.cit.*, pp. 175-176.

2. R.H. Davies, *Capital, State and White Labour in S.A. 1900-1960*, *op.cit.*, pp. 304, 330; A. Hepple, *op.cit.*, p. 50; D. O'Meara, "Assault on White Trade Unionism in S.A.", *op.cit.*, pp. 69-70.

## 2. Trade Unions with Representative Systems of Government

### (I) The Mine Workers' Union

#### Membership characteristics

It will be recalled that the M.W.U. enrolled only whites as members.<sup>1</sup> The bulk of the Union's members were employed as underground miners on the Witwatersrand goldfields. The M.W.U. also had members in the 'rural' Transvaal and on the Natal coalfields.<sup>2</sup>

The M.W.U. did not operate any benefit schemes until the close of the 1930's.<sup>3</sup> Only a minority of the white underground miners were Union members prior to the conclusion of the closed shop agreement in 1937 between the Gold Producers' Committee of the Chamber of Mines and the registered trade unions. For example, the M.W.U. had approximately 3 500 members in 1936.<sup>4</sup>

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1. See p. 44 above.

2. The statements are based on an overall impression of the material examined in regard to the M.W.U.

3. "Proceedings of the M.W.U. Commission of Enquiry", box vol. 2 : M.W.U. leaders' evidence. File vol. 5, 4 November 1940, pp. 303-304; J.A. Stark's evidence. File vo. 22, 9 December 1940, pp. 1700, 1739-1740, 1742, op.cit.

4. L. Naudé, op.cit., pp. 21-22. For further information on the closed shop agreement see p. 74 above.

The 1937 closed shop agreement made no provision for stop order facilities and the M.W.U.'s subscriptions were collected in an inefficient manner. Thus, in practice, a significant number of miners either failed to enrol as members or fell into arrears with their subscriptions. In addition, the Afrikaner nationalists called on their supporters on one or two occasions to refrain from paying their subscriptions.<sup>1</sup> L. Naudé stated that in 1936 almost 90 per cent of the approximately twelve thousand white underground miners on the Witwatersrand were Afrikaners.<sup>2</sup>

Finally, it should be noted that the members of the three white mining workers' trade unions (i.e., the M.W.U., the South African Engine Drivers' and Firemen's Association and the South African Reduction Workers' Association) were protected by statutory job colour bars. In other words, statutory job colour bars protected virtually all white miners from being displaced by (cheap) non-white labour.<sup>3</sup> Consequently, there was little need for the mining workers' trade unions to consider establishing links with non-white workers and trade unions.

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1. See the general evidence given before the 1940/1941 and 1946 M.W.U. Commissions of Enquiry. Transvaal Archives.

2. L. Naudé, *op.cit.*, pp. 18-19.

3. R.H. Davies, Capital, State and White Labour in S.A. 1900-1960, *op.cit.*, pp. 186-189.

### System of government

The M.W.U.'s constitution, which operated for much of the 1930's, provided for a large annual conference of shaft representatives.<sup>1</sup> The ordinary executive council members were elected at the conferences by means of a show of hands. Any expulsion from the Union had to be approved by a conference.<sup>2</sup>

The office-bearers and the full-time officials (e.g., the general secretary) were elected by means of a ballot of the membership. The full-time officials became permanent employees while the office bearers and the ordinary executive council members were subject to periodic elections.<sup>3</sup>

The M.W.U.'s constitution, which operated during the 1940's, was deliberately designed to weaken the members' control over their leaders. For example, the paid officials were appointed by the executive council, and the leadership had the authority to expel members from the Union.<sup>4</sup>

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1. For a discussion on the shaft representatives see p. 118 below.
  2. The constitutional provisions are derived from the general evidence given before the 1940/1941 M.W.U. Commission of Enquiry, op.cit.
  3. Ibid.
  4. L. Naudé, op.cit., pp. 125-126; Report of the M.W.U. Commission of Enquiry, 1946, par. 3(F), op.cit.



The new constitution still made provision for the individual shafts to elect representatives. However, the shaft representatives were divided into a number of district committees. Each district committee elected a number of delegates to attend the Union's conferences (i.e., one delegate for every five hundred members or part thereof employed in a district). The full-time officials and the office bearers were ex officio delegates and comprised a significant minority of the approximately sixty/seventy conference delegates.<sup>1</sup>

The district committees had limited functions. The M.W.U. had no branches on the Witwatersrand. The Union had a few branches in Natal and the 'rural' Transvaal.<sup>2</sup>

### The leadership

A number of authors have pointed out that the M.W.U. leadership during the 1930's and 1940's was corrupt, authoritarian and unable to obtain improvements in the economic position of its members.<sup>3</sup> Although the M.W.U. leadership consisted

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1. L. Naude, op.cit., pp. 217, 219; Report of the M.W.U. Commission of Enquiry, 1946, par. 3(A), op.cit.
  2. M.W.U. leaders' evidence. Box vol. 2, file vol. 5, 4 November 1940, pp. 298, 323, in "Proceedings of the M.W.U. Commission of Enquiry", op.cit.
  3. L. Naude, op.cit., passim; D. O'Meara, "Assault on White Trade Unionism in S.A.", op.cit., pp. 66-69; R.H. Davies, Capital, State and White Labour in S.A. 1900-1960, op.cit., pp. 286, 299-302.

largely of Afrikaners the general secretaryship was often held by a non-Afrikaner.<sup>1</sup> Thus, for example, the general secretary between 1935 and 1939 was a Jew, C. Harris.<sup>2</sup>

The top officials dominated the M.W.U. leadership.<sup>3</sup> Thus, for instance, J.F.J. Van Rensburg (a lay executive council member of the M.W.U.) admitted in his evidence before the 1940/1941 M.W.U. Commission of Enquiry that the officials dominated the executive council meetings:

[Commissioner] How long have you been a member of the Executive?

[Van Rensburg] Approximately three years.

[Commissioner] Did you ever get a copy of the minutes prior to November last?

[Van Rensburg] Never. ...I often raised the point because I consider it a waste of time to sit and listen to the reading of the minutes when you cannot assimilate what is being read. The result is that you agree to minutes without knowing what you are agreeing to.

[Commissioner] ...rush the thing [minutes] through! Sign, sign, sign!?

[Van Rensburg] May I point out to members

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1. The statement is based on an overall impression of the material examined in regard to the M.W.U.
  2. L. Naudé, *op.cit.*, pp. 21-22, 128, 131.
  3. "Findings and Recommendations of the M.W.U. Commission (1941)", p. 3. G.W.U. Archives, DBA 24 ; Minutes of the M.W.U. Commission of Enquiry, 6 May 1946. Transvaal Archives.

of this Commission that we as members of the Executive are in an invidious position. Your position becomes almost impossible if you begin harping on points, raising such small points.

[Commissioner] But this [i.e., the minutes] is a big point.

[Van Rensburg] If you continue raising points eventually you disturb the atmosphere.

[Commissioner] But you are the boss. The Executive Committee...rules supreme. Why did you not pass a resolution to the effect that the minutes should be circularised. ...surely you are masters in your own house?

[Van Rensburg] Hardly.

[Commissioner] The Executive has no say in the running of the Union?

[Van Rensburg] They have some say. I may appear ridiculous to this Commission, but at the same time I am no greater fool than the average mine worker.]

The M.W.U. leadership held strongly racist views and the Union was a member of the nebulous 'right-wing' group of T. & L.C. affiliates.<sup>2</sup> The Union's executive council resolved in September 1939 to adopt a neutral policy on the war issue. The executive council came out in full support of the war effort after Hitler had invaded the Benelux countries in 1940<sup>3</sup> - the Netherlands is, of course,

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1. J.F.J. Van Rensburg's evidence. Box vol. 2, file vol. 17, 2 December 1940, p. 1356, in "Proceedings of the M.W.U. Commission of Enquiry", op.cit.
  2. The statement is based on an overall impression of the material examined in regard to the M.W.U. and the T. & L.C.
  3. The Mine Worker, September 1939, May 1940; C.C. Hudson's evidence. Box vol. 2, file vol. 12, 18 November 1940, pp. 845-846, in "Proceedings of the M.W.U. Commission of Enquiry", op.cit.

the ancestral home of most Afrikaners. Although he almost immediately recanted it is worth noting that the chairman of the Afrikaner nationalist faction in the M.W.U., S. Schoeman, denounced Hitler's invasion of the Netherlands and endorsed the war effort.<sup>1</sup>

While we shall deal with the L.P.'s relations with the M.W.U. in the second part of the thesis, it should be noted at this stage that the M.W.U. leadership was condemned as incompetent and authoritarian by both the Afrikaner nationalists and the L.P. during the latter 1930's - a fact which Davies and O'Meara essentially ignored.<sup>2</sup> It was only after the M.W.U. had endorsed the war effort that the L.P. came out in support of the incumbent Union leadership.<sup>3</sup>

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1. The Mine Worker, January 1941.
  2. R.H. Davies, Capital, State and White Labour in S.A. 1900-1960, op.cit., pp. 281-330; D. O'Meara, "Assault on White Trade Unionism in S.A.", op.cit., pp. 45-72; D. O'Meara, "Class, Capital and Ideology in the Development of Afrikaner Nationalism", op.cit., p. 310.
  3. The Indicator, February 1939; Minutes of the Joint meeting of L.P.N.E.C. and M.W.U.E.C., 10 August 1944. Minutebooks, etc., no. 27. L.P. Archives.

### The struggle for control : (A) 1937-1941

The N.R.T. varied its strategy after the closed shop agreement came into operation in mid-1937. It resolved to gain control of the M.W.U. and focused its attention on the Union's conference.<sup>1</sup>

The N.R.T.'s faction in the M.W.U., the Hervormings Organisasie binne die Mynwerkersunie, was formally established during the course of 1938.<sup>2</sup> The N.R.T.'s faction concentrated its attention on mobilising the workers at the individual shafts.<sup>3</sup>

Broadly speaking, each shaft was represented at M.W.U. conferences by a single delegate - irrespective of the number of members employed at a particular shaft. The result was that the smaller mines in Natal and the 'rural' Transvaal were represented at conferences by a disproportionate number of delegates.<sup>4</sup> The members at the outlying mines tended to support the incumbent leadership.<sup>5</sup>

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1. L. Naude, op.cit., pp. 51, 57.

2. Ibid., pp. 64-66, 69-70; "Proceedings of the M.W.U. Commission of Enquiry", box vol. 2 : S. Schoeman's evidence. File vol. 9, 12 November 1940, pp. 566, 571; C.C. Hudson's evidence. File vol. 12, 18 November 1940, pp. 844-845, file vol. 13, 19 November 1940, pp. 931-933, 935, op.cit.

3. L. Naude, op.cit., pp. 57-61, 70; "Proceedings of the M.W.U. Commission of Enquiry", box vol. 2 : (?) Gericke's evidence. File vol. 15, 21 November 1940, pp. 1085-1086; D.T. Cornelius's evidence. File vol. 15, 21 November 1940, pp. 1165-1166; J.P. Van den Bergh's evidence. File vol. 16, 22 November 1940, pp. 1199-1201, op.cit.

4. L. Naude, op.cit., pp. 115, 217; C.C. Hudson's evidence. Box vol. 2, file vol. 12, 18 November 1940, pp. 852-856, in "Proceedings of the M.W.U. Commission of Enquiry", op.cit.

5. L. Naude, op.cit., pp. 57, 115, 122, 249.

The Afrikaner nationalists provided the 1940/1941 M.W.U. Commission of Enquiry with numerous examples in support of their allegations that the M.W.U. leadership deliberately failed to forward credentials to duly elected shaft representatives, that some meetings to elect shaft representatives were irregularly organised, and that the conferences were packed with shaft representatives from the outlying mines. However, it is clear that at least some of the incidents in question can be traced to the general maladministration of the M.W.U. and were not deliberately engineered by the Union leadership.<sup>1</sup>

The M.W.U. conferences were often very unruly<sup>2</sup>. With the possible exception of the February 1939 conference the M.W.U. leadership enjoyed the support of a majority of the shaft representatives at the various conferences. Thus, for example, at the April 1939 conference the chairman of the N.R.T.'s faction, S. Schoeman, was expelled from the Union, a new authoritarian-style constitution was adopted and a pro-leadership executive council was elected.<sup>3</sup>

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1. See the general evidence given before the 1940/1941 M.W.U. Commission of Enquiry, op.cit.
  2. "Findings and Recommendations of the M.W.U. Commission (1941)", p. 3, op.cit.
  3. L. Naudé, pp. 64-66, 124-125; "Proceedings of the M.W.U. Commission of Enquiry", box vol. 2 : C.C. Hudson's evidence. File vol. 12, 18 November 1940, p. 864, file vol. 13, 19 November 1940, pp. 901-902; H.M.B. De Wit's evidence. File vol. 14, 20 November 1940, pp. 987-989, op.cit.

In terms of the M.W.U.'s constitution the annual conference scheduled for February 1939 could not be postponed. The M.W.U. leadership resolved to adjourn the conference immediately after it had been formally opened. Although the evidence is contradictory it would appear that the leadership wished to adjourn the conference till a later date in order to be able to amend the Union's constitution (the 1933 constitution could be amended only every three years).<sup>1</sup>

S. Schoeman, who attended the conference as a shaft representative, strenuously opposed the meeting's adjournment. The President of the M.W.U., J.A. Van den Berg, who paradoxically remained loyal to the incumbent leadership notwithstanding his active support for the N.P., adjourned the conference on the ground that the meeting had become unruly. The Afrikaner nationalists declined to accept the ruling and continued the conference. They passed numerous resolutions, elected a new executive council and attempted the following day to take possession of the M.W.U.'s offices. The Supreme Court subsequently ruled that Van den Berg had acted constitutionally in adjourning the conference.<sup>2</sup>

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1. Star, 13 February 1939; L. Naudé, op.cit., pp. 115-116; Minutes of the M.W.U. Commission of Enquiry, 29 April 1946, op.cit.
  2. Star, 13 February 1939; Minutes of the M.W.U. Commission of Enquiry, 29 April 1946, op.cit.; L. Naudé, op.cit., pp. 116-118; H.M.B. De Wit's evidence. Box vol 2, file vol. 14, 20 November 1940, pp. 989-990, in "Proceedings of the M.W.U. Commission of Enquiry", op.cit.  
For information on J.A. Van den Berg see pp. 264, 266 below.

The N.R.T.'s faction put up candidates in the elections for the office bearer positions in March 1939 and for the vacant post of general secretary at the beginning of 1940 (the incumbent general secretary, C. Harris, was assassinated by a young Afrikaner nationalist in June 1939).<sup>1</sup> The elections were organised in an inefficient manner (e.g., no voters' rolls were used).<sup>2</sup>

The Afrikaner nationalists drew the Department of Labour's attention to numerous irregularities during the course of the 1939 election. The M.W.U. leadership allowed the Department to supervise the final stages of the election. The N.R.T.'s faction won four of the six office bearer posts. However, the incumbent president, Van den Berg, edged out his Afrikaner nationalist opponent by twenty-two votes.<sup>3</sup> The Afrikaner nationalist office bearers were easily neutralised by the incumbent leadership.<sup>4</sup>

The M.W.U. leadership engaged in blatant ballot rigging in the election for the post of general secretary (e.g., ballot boxes with false bottoms were used). Nevertheless the leadership's candidate won by only twenty-six votes.<sup>5</sup>

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1. For Harris's assassination see L. Naudé, *op.cit.*, pp. 128-130.

2. L. Naudé, *op.cit.*, pp. 120-121, 136.

3. *Ibid.*, p. 121.

4. See the general evidence given before the 1940/1941 M.W.U. Commission of Enquiry, *op.cit.*

5. L. Naudé, *op.cit.*, pp. 137, 139, 165-171; J.A. Van den Bergh's evidence. Box vol. 2, file vol. 22, 9 December 1940, pp. 1763-1764, in "Proceedings of the M.W.U. Commission of Enquiry", *op.cit.*



With the assistance of the war-coalition government the M.W.U. in 1941 obtained the suspension of all elections in the Union until six months after the cessation of hostilities. It was argued that the M.W.U. leadership's support base had been considerably weakened by the enlistment of a large number of miners.<sup>1</sup>

#### The struggle for control : (B) 1946-1948

There is evidence that numerous Afrikaner nationalist groups interested themselves in the miners' struggle in the post-war years.<sup>2</sup> The U.P. government failed to issue a proclamation that hostilities had ceased and the miners were saddled with an irremovable leadership which displayed little interest in their welfare.<sup>3</sup> The miners engaged in two large-scale strikes on the Witwatersrand in 1946 and 1947 in protest against the position in the M.W.U.<sup>4</sup>

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1. L. Naudé, *op.cit.*, pp. 176-177; R.H. Davies, *Capital, State and White Labour in S.A. 1900-1960*, *op.cit.*, pp. 300-301. The S.A. Cinematograph Operators' Union also appears to have obtained permission from the administration to postpone elections till after the termination of hostilities. The S.A. Cinematograph Operators' Union. Alteration to Constitution - Precautionary War Measure (n.d.). Dept. of Labour Files, box 743, *op.cit.*; Industrial Registrar, J. Potgieter to the Divisional Inspector, 26 June 1940. Dept. of Labour Files, box 743, *op.cit.*
  2. T. Dunbar Moodie, *op.cit.*, pp. 232-233; Minutes of the M.W.U. Commission of Enquiry, 29 April 1946, *op.cit.*
  3. A. Rosenberg's statement, 8 February 1949, p. 984, in "Proceedings of the G.W.U. Commission of Enquiry", *op.cit.*
  4. L. Naudé, *op.cit.*, pp. 209-212, 221-229, 232.

The U.P. government organised elections in the M.W.U. after the strikes. However, the Afrikaner nationalists were dissatisfied with the organisation of the two elections. They successfully appealed to the Supreme Court on both occasions to have the elections declared invalid on technical grounds.<sup>1</sup>

The Afrikaner nationalists had a number of justifiable grievances in regard to the elections. They referred, for example, to the conduct of the government commission which had organised the 1946 election. The commission had initially resolved that the Krugersdorp district committee's conference delegates be elected at a specially convened district committee meeting (the shaft representatives had declined to elect any delegates at their original meeting as one of their colleagues had not been furnished with his credentials). The U.P. government had considered the Krugersdorp district committee as an Afrikaner nationalist stronghold and the Minister of Labour, C. Steyn, had successfully brought improper pressure to bear on the commission to declare that the Krugersdorp district committee had forfeited the right to elect delegates to the Union's annual conference.<sup>2</sup>

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1. Ibid., pp. 211-212, 220, 222-223, 227-228, 232, 239-241.

2. Ibid., pp. 218-219; Minutes of the M.W.U. Commission of Enquiry, 29 July 1946, 9 August 1946, op.cit. For the M.W.U.'s constitution see pp. 113-114, 118 above.

We have already noted that the Afrikaner nationalists secured a resounding victory in the M.W.U. election at the close of 1948.<sup>1</sup>

(II) The Amalgamated Society of Woodworkers  
and the Building Workers' Industrial Union

Membership characteristics

The B.W.I.U., which had branches throughout much of the country, enrolled a variety of craftsmen engaged in building operations.<sup>2</sup> The Union also admitted a small number of semi-skilled workers as members.<sup>3</sup>

While the B.W.I.U. enrolled only whites in the Transvaal and the Orange Free State it had mixed (i.e., white - Coloured/Indian) and segregated Coloured/Indian and white branches in Natal and the Eastern Cape (the Union had no branches in the Western Cape).<sup>4</sup> The B.W.I.U. had 8 327 members in 1946. Approximately half of the members were in the Transvaal during the period under review.<sup>5</sup>

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1. L. Naudé, op.cit., pp. 245-249, 253.
  2. Judgment of Solomon J., delivered 12 December 1938, B.W.I.U. vs. the Minister of Labour, T.P.D., pp. 1-7, op.cit.
  3. The Building Worker, March/April 1946.
  4. Ibid., July/August 1944; J.D.F. Briggs's evidence. File vol. 15, 21 September 1934, Johannesburg, pp. 1619-1664, in "Proceedings of the Industrial Legislation Commission". Transvaal Archives; Minutes of B.W.I.U. Combined Organisers and Sub-Committees Meeting, 18 September 1947. T.U.C.S.A. Archives, DA 5-3; Minutes of B.W.I.U.E.C. Quarterly Meeting, 6 December 1947. T.U.C.S.A. Archives, DA 5-3.
  5. Minutes of the Annual Conference of the A.U. of B.T.W. of S.A., 21 July 1952, Johannesburg. T.U.C.S.A. Archives, DD 4-17; A.U. of B.T.W. of S.A. Circular to All Branches, 18 June 1952. A.U. of B.T.W. of S.A. Archives; W. Blake, General Secretary, B.W.I.U. to Secretary, T. & L.C., 20 January 1947. T.U.C.S.A. Archives, DA 7-1.

The Transvaal-based Amalgamated Bricklayers' Trade Union of South Africa enrolled only whites and had a membership of 1 375 in 1946.<sup>1</sup> The Union merged with the B.W.I.U. at the close of the 1940's (the amalgamated union retained the name of the B.W.I.U. for a number of years).<sup>2</sup>

The A.S.W., which was a country-wide craft union, had 5 837 members in 1945.<sup>3</sup> With the exception of its mixed branches in the Western Cape the A.S.W. enrolled only whites as members.<sup>4</sup> The Western Cape members comprised approximately 20 per cent of the Union's membership (a large majority of the Western Cape members were Coloured). The Transvaal members comprised 57 per cent of the A.S.W.'s membership in 1935, 49 per cent in 1945 and only 37 per cent in 1953.<sup>5</sup>

By the early 1940's a majority of the A.S.W.'s and the B.W.I.U.'s Pretoria members were Afrikaners. However, Afrikaners probably comprised a minority of the A.S.W.'s and the B.W.I.U.'s Transvaal members until at least the mid-1940's.<sup>6</sup> A closed shop provision was rarely, if ever, included in the Witwatersrand and Pretoria building industry industrial agreements.<sup>7</sup>

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1. Constitution of the Amalgamated Bricklayers' Trade Union of S.A. as Amended in July 1933 and Approved by the Registrar of Trade Unions and Employers' Organisations (n.d.), p.2. Dept. of Labour Files, box 717, op.cit.; General Secretary, Amalgamated Bricklayers' Trade Union of S.A. to Secretary, T. & L.C., 17 January 1947. T.U.C.S.A. Archives, DA 7-1.
  2. Statement on P.J. Huyser, 15 July 1952. T.U.C.S.A. Archives, DD 4-17.
  3. A.S.W.M.R., April 1945.
  4. Minutes of A.S.W.E.C. Meeting, 31 August 1928, 6 March 1936, 20 March 1936, op.cit.; Minutes of A.S.W. Adjourned E.C. Meeting, 10 December 1942, op.cit.
  5. The regional percentages are derived from branch returns. A.S.W.M.R., September 1928, February 1935, May 1939, April 1945, April 1947, May 1948, March 1953.
  6. The statements are based on a general impression of the material examined in regard to the two trade unions.
  7. The Building Worker, November/December 1944, January/February 1946; A.S.W.M.R., November 1947.

The A.S.W.'s members outside the Western Cape had almost no contact with their non-white colleagues.<sup>1</sup> On the other hand, friction occurred at B.W.I.U. conferences, Natal district committee meetings, etc., over the presence of non-white delegates.<sup>2</sup>

Although numerous white members were opposed to the admission of non-whites to the B.W.I.U. they were unable to muster sufficient support seriously to challenge the multi-racial character of the Union. Thus, for example, a Germiston branch motion at the 1952 conference of the B.W.I.U. that the Union be restricted to white members was defeated by fifteen votes to six.<sup>3</sup>

#### Systems of government

The A.S.W. and the B.W.I.U. had a number of constitutional features in common: i.e., a union executive council based in Johannesburg and elected by a vote of the membership (white and non-white); numerous branches and district

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1. See the section on systems of government below.
  2. The Building Worker, March/April 1946; B.W.I.U. Circular to All Branches, 1 January 1948, Organisers' December 1947 Reports. G. Palmer's, Assistant - Natal Organiser, Report for December 1947 for Pietermaritzburg. T.U.C.S.A. Archives, DA 5-3; B.W.I.U. Circular to All Branches, 25 March 1948, Organisers' March 1948 Reports. J. Couzen's, Natal Organiser, Report for March 1948. T.U.C.S.A. Archives, DA 5-3.
  3. Minutes of the Eleventh National Conference of the A.U. of B.T.W. of S.A., July 1952. A.U. of B.T.W. of S.A. Archives.

committees; the referendum; and the election of all the full-time officials to their posts (they were generally subject to periodic elections).<sup>1</sup>

In contrast to the A.S.W. the B.W.I.U. organised conferences of branch delegates. The A.S.W. had a general council which consisted of approximately four regionally elected lay councillors. The council met only once or twice a year. Its main functions were, inter alia, to ensure that the constitution was adhered to by the executive council, etc., and to serve as a final court of appeal.<sup>2</sup>

#### The leaderships

The A.S.W.'s and the B.W.I.U.'s leaderships drifted towards the right as the 1930's and 1940's progressed (e.g., the steady erosion of support for either a Marxist or a nebulous 'social democratic' ideology, and an increasing reluctance to take a stand on "political" issues). However, the A.S.W.'s leadership was considerably more conservative than its B.W.I.U. counterpart during the period under review.<sup>3</sup>

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1. The constitutional provisions are derived from a general study of The Building Worker, A.S.W.M.R., the A.U. of B.T.W. of S.A. Archives and the B.W.I.U. minutebooks in the T.U.C.S.A. Archives.

2. Ibid.

3. See the A.U. of B.T.W. of S.A. Archives and the B.W.I.U. minutebooks in the T.U.C.S.A. Archives; C.B. Tyler, General Secretary, B.W.I.U. to Secretary, T.U.C., 3 September 1929. T.U.C.S.A. Archives, C 3.3.

A majority of English-speaking members generally served on the two unions' executive councils during the 1940's and the early 1950's. A few centrists generally served on the B.W.I.U.'s executive council during this period. However, with the exception of a short period during the early 1940's, centrists struggled to win election to the A.S.W.'s executive council.<sup>1</sup>

In contrast to the A.S.W. a number of the B.W.I.U.'s head-quarter officials held communist/radical views (e.g., C.B. Tyler, the general secretary of the B.W.I.U., 1923-1943; and P.J. Huyser, the national organiser of the B.W.I.U., 1948-1953). Tyler was expelled from the Communist Party (C.P.) in 1931 for engaging in "reformist" trade union activity while Huyser was a member of the Party during the first half of the 1940's.<sup>2</sup>

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1. See the A.U. of B.T.W. of S.A. Archives and the B.W.I.U. minute-books in the T.U.C.S.A. Archives. The term centrist is defined at p.81 footnote 1 above.
  2. Umsebenzi, 4 September 1931; The Building Worker, August/September 1943; Instructions to Counsel, P.J. Huyser, 20 September 1950. T.U.C.S.A. Archives; Statement on P.J. Huyser, 15 July 1952, op.cit.; W. Blake, General Secretary, A.U. of B.T.W. of S.A. to A. Hepple, 19 October 1953. T.U.C.S.A. Archives, DC 2-6.

### Economic considerations

The workers employed in the Witwatersrand and Pretoria building industry obtained a number of improvements in their conditions of service during the war years (e.g., an annual paid holiday was introduced). The industry was regulated during the war years by awards made under the emergency war regulations and the 1944 award was scheduled to expire at the beginning of 1947.<sup>1</sup>

The government resolved to train a number of (white and Coloured) ex-servicemen as building artisans and provided the building artisans with a complex ten year employment guarantee as a quid pro quo for the scheme. However, numerous building workers were dissatisfied with the scheme's provisions (e.g., an unemployed artisan was to receive 80 per cent of the standard wage rate). The A.S.W.'s membership, for example, formally rejected the scheme in two referenda in early 1946.<sup>2</sup>

The various building workers' trade unions strenuously opposed a subsequent government decision to train a number of black ex-servicemen as building artisans (the black

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1. A.S.W.M.R., June 1942, July 1942; The Building Worker, November/December 1944, November/December 1945.
  2. A.S.W.M.R., December 1945, February 1946, April 1946, August 1948.



artisans were to be restricted to the erection, repair, etc., of buildings in black areas). Davies has suggested that the controversy over the issue, which raged during 1946 and 1947, resulted in the building artisans being the only group of craftsmen to provide the N.P. with considerable electoral support in the 1948 general election.<sup>1</sup>

The 1944 award expired at the beginning of 1947 without a new industrial agreement having been concluded. The Building Unions' Joint Executives (B.U.J.E.) finally called its affiliates' members employed in the Witwatersrand and Pretoria building industry out on strike during the latter half of 1947 (although affiliated to the B.U.J.E. the South African Electrical Workers' Association ignored the strike call).<sup>2</sup> It must be noted that O'Meara

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1. R.H. Davies, *Capital, State and White Labour in S.A. 1900-1960*, op.cit., pp. 318-319; Minutes of A.S.W.E.C. Meeting, 28 June 1946, 4 October 1946, 15 November 1946, 13 December 1946, 27 December 1946, 17 January 1947, 11 July 1947, op.cit.; Housing (Emergency Powers) Act, 1945. Labour Regulations. Training of Natives for the Building Industry. Report of Meeting between Representatives of the Government and of the Trade Unions, 24 January 1947. T.U.C.S.A. Archives, DD 10-14; A.S.W.M.R., April 1947, December 1947; The Building Worker, March/April 1946.

For a discussion on craft union opposition to the N.P. see pp. 58-59 above.

2. Minutes of B.W.I.U.E.C. Meeting, 9 August 1947. T.U.C.S.A. Archives, DA 5-3; B.W.I.U. Circular to All Branches, 22 October 1947 : Johannesburg B.W.I.U. of S.A. Strike Committee Report on Building Workers' Strike in the Johannesburg, Pretoria and Later East Rand Areas, A. Anderson, Secretary, B.W.I.U. Strike Committee; Final Report on Strike, A. Anderson, Secretary, Johannesburg B.W.I.U. of S.A. Strike Committee. T.U.C.S.A. Archives, DA 5-3.

was incorrect in stating that the strike was over the question of the state's training schemes for black bricklayers.<sup>1</sup>

After a bitter nine week strike the building workers' trade unions concluded a four year industrial agreement with the Witwatersrand and Pretoria Master Builders' Associations. The agreement made provision for slight increases in the basic wage rates (as distinct from cost of living allowances), a gradual reduction of the work-week from forty-three hours to forty, etc.<sup>2</sup>

During the course of the strike the B.U.J.E. submitted a proposed agreement concluded with the employers to the workers for approval. While a mass meeting of Pretoria workers resolved to accept the agreement and to return to work, the Johannesburg mass meeting rejected the agreement and resolved to continue the strike. The Pretoria workers subsequently rejoined the struggle after an abortive attempt had been made to conclude a 'gentleman's' agreement with the Pretoria employers.<sup>3</sup>

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1. D. O'Meara, "Class, Capital and Ideology in the Development of Afrikaner Nationalism", op.cit., p. 83; D. O'Meara, "The 1946 African Mine Workers' Strike and the Political Economy of South Africa", in Journal of Commonwealth and Comparative Politics, March 1975, p. 165.
  2. B.W.I.U. Circular to All Branches, 22 October 1947, op.cit.; A.S.W.M.R., November 1947.
  3. B.W.I.U. Circular to All Branches, 17 November 1947. Pretoria Branch, B.W.I.U. of S.A., Report on the Building Industry Strike 1947 in the Pretoria Area, J.H. De Wet Lombard, Pretoria Branch Secretary. T.U.C.S.A. Archives, DA 5.3; Minutes of B.W.I.U. Special E.C. Meeting, 23 August 1947. T.U.C.S.A. Archives, DA 5.3.

The strike was characterised by political 'factionalism'. The B.W.B.B. interested itself to an unknown extent in the strike and Afrikaner nationalist activists such as G.H. Beetge (a member of the A.S.W.'s executive) and J. Lubbe (a member of the B.W.I.U.'s executive) engaged in a number of intrigues. Thus, for example, an unsuccessful attempt was made to dislodge the radical Afrikaner, P.J. Huyser (then the general secretary of the Amalgamated Bricklayers' Trade Union of South Africa), from his position as chairman of the Central Strike Committee<sup>1</sup> - Huyser was generally credited with having swayed the Johannesburg mass meeting to reject the proposed agreement.<sup>2</sup>

Huyser did not always enjoy the support of a majority of the building workers who attended mass meetings during the strike. Thus, for instance, a G.W.U. official reported as follows on a mass meeting of building workers from the East Rand:

The meeting of the Building Workers at Benoni was called...by the Central Strike Committee. Several hundred workers turned up at the meeting - also a small group of workers from Johannesburg and about forty to fifty picked men (stormtroopers) from Pretoria, led by Mr. Beetge.

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1. B.M. Touyz, op.cit., p. 84; A.S.W.M.R., July 1947; Minutes of B.W.I.U.E.C. Meeting, 11 October 1947. T.U.C.S.A. Archives, DA 5-3; B.W.I.U. Circular to All Branches, 22 October 1947. Final Report on Strike, op.cit.; Statement on P.J. Huyser, 15 July 1952, op.cit. For further information on Beetge and Lubbe see pp. 135-136, 138-140, 143-144, 209-210, 219-220, 323 below.
  2. Minutes of B.W.I.U. Special E.C. Meeting, 4 September 1947. T.U.C.S.A. Archives, DA 5-3.

Piet Huyser started addressing the meeting and the Pretoria group started shouting in the usual Nationalist Party manner that a neutral chairman from among the East Rand workers should be elected. Piet Huyser said this meeting was called by the Central Strike Committee whose action was endorsed by the Joint Executives and he as chairman was going to proceed with the meeting. The Pretoria group thereupon called upon the workers to leave the hall and have a meeting of their own.... The majority of the workers left the meeting and were addressed by Mr. Beetge and others outside. Mr. Beetge's address consisted of an attack upon Communists, etc., etc.

...after about half an hour the disrupters came back, assaulted the two stewards standing at the door... [and] marched up to the platform in a group and tried to grab the microphone but Piet Huyser stopped them. Mr. Beetge then halted his tactics and Piet Huyser was given a hearing.]

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1. Report on the Meeting of the Building Workers of the East Rand held at the Benoni Town Hall, 30 August 1947. G.W.U. Archives.

### The struggle for control : (A) Introduction

The A.S.W. and the B.W.I.U. experienced little Afrikaner nationalist factionalism during the latter 1930's.<sup>1</sup> By the early 1940's the unions' Transvaal members were being buffeted by Afrikaner nationalist propaganda and intrigue; and their Pretoria branches soon came under the control of members who leaned in favour of the Afrikaner nationalists.<sup>2</sup>

The Pretoria branches of the two unions enjoyed an increasing degree of autonomy as the 1940's progressed. For example, notwithstanding the fact that the A.S.W. was affiliated to the T. & L.C. until early 1949, the Pretoria branch of the Society affiliated to the K.R.S.A.V. in 1948 and remained linked to the federation until at least mid-1950.<sup>3</sup> The A.S.W.'s and the B.W.I.U.'s leaderships attempted to regain control over their Pretoria branches during the early 1950's.<sup>4</sup>

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1. Minutes of A.S.W.E.C. Meeting, 29 October 1937, 26 November 1937, 31 March 1939, 1 September 1939, op.cit.
  2. Ibid., 17 November 1944, 14 May 1946, 31 May 1946, 26 June 1946; A.S.W.M.R., May 1943, July 1944, August 1944; The Building Worker, July/August 1944.
  3. Minutes of A.S.W.E.C. Meeting, 14 January 1949, 4 March 1949, 18 March 1949, 1 April 1949, 9 June 1950, 27 October 1950, op.cit.  
For further information on the K.R.S.A.V. see pp. 71-72 above and 220 below.
  4. Minutes of B.W.I.U.E.C. Meeting, 1 April 1950. A.U. of B.T.W. of S.A. Archives; Minutes of B.W.I.U. Special E.C. Meeting, 6 May 1950. A.U. of B.T.W. of S.A. Archives; Minutes of A.S.W.E.C. Meeting, 6 June 1952, 1 August 1952, 13 October 1952, op.cit.; Minutes of A.S.W. Special E.C. Meeting, 19 September 1952, op.cit.

Numerous Witwatersrand branches of the two unions and the A.S.W.'s Transvaal district committee leaned increasingly towards an Afrikaner nationalist and/or nebulous 'right-wing' stance as the 1940's progressed (the B.W.I.U. had no district committee in the province).<sup>1</sup>

The large number of A.S.W. and B.W.I.U. branches in the Transvaal provided numerous members with the means to further their careers in the unions. For example, E. Simpson (the long-serving secretary of the A.S.W.'s Johannesburg number one branch and a sympathiser of the L.P.) and G.H. Beetge (the secretary of the A.S.W.'s Pretoria branch during the mid-1940's and, as we have seen, an Afrikaner nationalist activist) were able to use their positions to acquire political skills and become known among the Transvaal members.<sup>2</sup>

Thus, for instance, Beetge was elected to the A.S.W.'s executive council in 1947.<sup>3</sup> He served as a member of the executive council until late 1949 when he successfully contested an election for one of the full-time Transvaal organising posts (in terms of the constitution he was obliged to resign from the executive council).<sup>4</sup> However,

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1. The statement is based on a general impression of the material examined in regard to the two unions and in particular on the way the branch members voted in elections and referenda.
  2. Minutes of A.S.W.E.C. Meeting, 17 November 1944, 11 May 1951, op.cit.
  3. A.S.W.M.R., July 1947, January 1948.
  4. Minutes of A.S.W.E.C. Meeting, 30 September 1949, op.cit.

he remained in his post for only one year, and was expelled from the A.S.W. in 1952 after it became known that he had been the author of an article which had appeared in the Afrikaner nationalist newspaper, Die Bouwerker, in 1950. The article had been highly critical of the A.S.W.<sup>1</sup>

The struggle for control :

(B) Transvaal organising posts

A number of centrists and leftists held Transvaal organising posts in the A.S.W. and the B.W.I.U. until towards the close of the 1940's<sup>2</sup> (e.g., D.J. Du Plessis, a prominent member of the C.P., was the East Rand organiser of the B.W.I.U. during the first half of the 1940's).<sup>3</sup> However, from the early 1940's an increasing number of Afrikaner nationalist and 'right-wing' English-speaking members were elected to Transvaal organising posts in the two unions.<sup>4</sup>

Thus, for instance, in 1943 J.D. Hewitt, the A.S.W.'s popularly elected representative on the Witwatersrand and Pretoria industrial council, violated an agreement between the building

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1. Ibid., 30 March 1951, 1 August 1952. For further information on Die Bouwerker see p.72 above.
  2. A.S.W.M.R., January 1946; The Building Worker, April 1940, July/August 1944; Minutes of B.W.I.U.E.C. Meeting, 14 February 1948. T.U.C.S.A. Archives, DA 5-3.
  3. The Building Worker, April 1940, July/August 1944.
  4. For examples of Afrikaner nationalist organisers see pp.135-136 above and 213-216, 219-220 below.

workers' trade unions when he voted with the employers' representatives against a B.W.I.U. motion at an industrial council meeting. The B.W.I.U. motion proposed that a black building workers' union be permitted to appoint a representative to an industrial council subcommittee which was to investigate the possibility of a paid annual holiday for the black workers in the industry. Hewitt later visited a number of Witwatersrand and Pretoria branches of the A.S.W. to lobby support for his stand; i.e., that he would not sit with blacks.<sup>1</sup>

The A.S.W.'s executive council subsequently expelled Hewitt from the Society. However, the A.S.W.'s general council duly instructed that Hewitt be reinstated in the Society.<sup>2</sup> By early 1944 only one of the three executive members who had voted for Hewitt's expulsion, E. Simpson, remained on the executive council (the other two were W.D. Arbuthnot and K.W. Reid).<sup>3</sup> On the other hand, Hewitt successfully contested an election for a Transvaal organising post at the close of 1944.<sup>4</sup>

The close of the 1940's witnessed an attempt by the B.W.I.U. leadership to prevent the Union in the Transvaal from falling under the control of Afrikaner nationalist sympathisers. The

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1. Minutes of A.S.W.E.C. Meeting, 21 May 1943, op.cit.; Minutes of A.S.W. Adjourned E.C. Meeting, 2 June 1943, op.cit.; Revised and Corrected Minutes of A.S.W.E.C. Meeting, 21 and 24 May 1943, 2 and 4 June 1943, op.cit.
  2. Minutes of A.S.W.E.C. Meeting, 1943-1944, op.cit.
  3. Ibid., 25 June 1943, 11 February 1944, 10 March 1944.  
For further information on W.D. Arbuthnot see pp. 142-144 below.
  4. A.S.W.M.R., January 1945.



B.W.I.U. leadership introduced a qualifying test for the candidates for the various organising posts;<sup>1</sup> and became embroiled in numerous controversies over its handling of the elections for the various Transvaal organising posts.

Thus, for example, J. Lubbe, an Afrikaner nationalist activist, narrowly defeated the incumbent, J.M. Meyer, in an election for the post of East Rand organiser in 1949. The B.W.I.U.'s executive council declared the election null and void on the ground that ballot papers had been tampered with (the Supreme Court subsequently upheld the executive council's action). However, before a fresh election could be held, Lubbe was brought before the executive council on nine charges of misconduct and was expelled from the Union. Die Bouwerker subsequently championed Lubbe's cause.<sup>2</sup>

Beetge was closely associated with the company which published Die Bouwerker and was responsible for the newspaper's distribution.<sup>3</sup> The newspaper was sold from the A.S.W.'s and the B.W.I.U.'s Pretoria offices. Beetge and another A.S.W. organiser, M. Schoeman, apparently even distributed Die Bouwerker when they visited construction sites. The two

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1. The Afrikaner nationalists later successfully contested the validity of the qualifying test in the Supreme Court (the registered constitution made no provision for a qualifying test). For footnote and text see Judgment of Ramsbottom J., delivered 26 June 1951, P.J. Huyser vs. Die Werkerspers Uitgewers...Beperk, W.L.D., pp. 14-15, op.cit.
  2. Judgment of Ramsbottom J., delivered 26 June 1951, P.J. Huyser vs. Die Werkerspers Uitgewers...Beperk, W.L.D., pp. 2-4, 7, op.cit.; W. Blake's, General Secretary, Report over Period June 1949 to June 1952 to A.U. of B.T.W. of S.A. Eleventh National Conference, July 1952. A.U. of B.T.W. of S.A. Archives.
  3. Judgment of Ramsbottom J., delivered 26 June 1951, P.J. Huyser vs. Die Werkerspers Uitgewers...Beperk, W.L.D., pp. 6, 22, op.cit.

unions' executive councils struggled to enforce a ban on the sale of the newspaper from branch offices, etc.<sup>1</sup> (the A.S.W. leadership had taken a stand on the issue only after the Society had been cited as a third respondent in a court action against Die Bouwerker).<sup>2</sup>

Shortly after the establishment of the A.B.'s action committee in April 1950 between fifty and a hundred Afrikaner nationalist building workers met in Johannesburg. They elected an action committee which consisted largely of Transvaal organisers of the A.S.W. and the B.W.I.U. (Beetge was later elected chairman of the committee). The action committee initially focused its attention on the B.W.I.U. elections for the various Transvaal organising posts.<sup>3</sup>

Thus, for example, in mid-1950 the action committee brought pressure to bear on J. Pretorius, the additional Pretoria

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1. Ibid., p. 22; Minutes of A.S.W.E.C. Meeting, 31 March 1950, 14 April 1950, 9 June 1950, op.cit.; Minutes of B.W.I.U.E.C. Meeting, 1 April 1950. A.U. of B.T.W. of S.A. Archives; Minutes of B.W.I.U. Special E.C. Meeting, 6 May 1950. A.U. of B.T.W. of S.A. Archives.
  2. Minutes of A.S.W. Special E.C. Meeting, 9 March 1950, op.cit.; Minutes of A.S.W.E.C. Meeting, 31 March 1950, op.cit.
  3. B.W.I.U. Circular, 22 August 1951, pp. 2-3, in A.U. of B.T.W. of S.A. Eleventh National Conference, 1952. Resolutions for Conference Confirmation, 18 June 1952. A.U. of B.T.W. of S.A. Archives; W. Blake's, General Secretary, Report over Period June 1949 to June 1952 to A.U. of B.T.W. of S.A. Eleventh National Conference, July 1952, op.cit.; J. Pretorius, Ex Additional Pretoria and District Organiser Inquiry. Documents Circulated to B.W.I.U. Executive Council Delegates, 14 November 1950. A.U. of B.T.W. of S.A. Archives. For information on the A.B.'s action committee see pp. 72-73 above.

and district organiser of the B.W.I.U., not to seek re-election to his post in the forthcoming organising post elections. Pretorius, who was a loyal supporter of the B.W.I.U. leadership, resigned from his post before the election and apparently returned to his trade in the building industry.<sup>1</sup> Pretorius alleged, inter alia, that he had been assaulted by Beetge:

Beetge rushed to me, caught me by the shirt and pullover and forced me against the opposite wall. I warned Beetge that I was on duty for my union the B.W.I.U. and Beetge replied that to *donner* [bloody hell] with the B.W.I.U., he would get rid of me, Piet Huyser and Blake [the general secretary of the B.W.I.U.] and the rest of the *donners* se communists. He kept on speaking saying I was a "*verraaier*" [traitor].... Beetge then stopped handling and shaking me about... and finished up by threatening that if I did not withdraw my nomination against M.J. Palm for the additional Pretoria and district organiser position he will not stop attacking me until I was dead.<sup>2</sup>

The B.W.I.U. leadership finally moved in mid-1951 against its officials and members who were connected with the action committee. Two organisers and the Roodepoort branch secretary agreed to resign from the committee.<sup>3</sup>

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1. W. Blake's, General Secretary, Report over Period June 1949 to June 1952 to A.U. of B.T.W. of S.A. Eleventh National Conference, July 1952, op.cit.
  2. J. Pretorius, Ex Additional Pretoria and District Organiser Inquiry. Documents Circulated to B.W.I.U. Executive Council Delegates, 14 November 1950, op.cit. For information on M.J. Palm see pp. 209-210, 213-216, 219-220 below.
  3. B.W.I.U. Circulars : 22 August 1951, pp. 2-3, 29 September 1951, pp. 14-15, 23 October 1951, p. 2, in A.U. of B.T.W. of S.A. Eleventh National Conference, 1952. Resolutions for Conference Confirmation, 18 June 1952, op.cit.

The struggle for control :

(C) The A.S.W.'s national elections

Although the A.S.W.'s elections were generally contested by numerous candidates only a small proportion of the members exercised their right to vote.<sup>1</sup> Thus, for example, the percentage poll for the Society's various referenda - which broadly reflected the position in the national elections - tended to fluctuate between 8 and 20 per cent of the membership.<sup>2</sup> However, the percentage poll in the individual branches varied considerably. For instance, less than 6 per cent of the large Durban branch's members generally voted in the national elections.<sup>3</sup>

The Pretoria branch comprised roughly 7 per cent of the A.S.W.'s membership during the 1940's.<sup>4</sup> The branch from the mid-1940's often recorded percentage polls of between.

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1. A.S.W.M.R., February 1935, January 1937, July 1944, January 1945, April 1945, January 1946, July 1947, January 1948, May 1948, January 1949, April 1951, May 1952, March 1953.
  2. The statistics are derived from referenda results between 1924 and 1954. A.S.W.M.R., July 1925, October 1926, October 1927, October 1928, May 1929, July 1930, January 1931, July 1932, February 1935, January 1936, January 1939, May 1939, October 1942, April 1942, April 1945, April 1946, April 1947.
  3. The percentage is derived from election results during the period under review. A.S.W.M.R., February 1935, January 1937, July 1944, January 1945, April 1945, January 1946, April 1947, July 1947, January 1948, May 1948, January 1949, April 1951, May 1952, March 1953.
  4. The Pretoria branch percentage is derived from branch returns. A.S.W.M.R., February 1935, May 1939, April 1945, April 1947, May 1948, March 1953.

20 and 45 per cent in elections. In addition, the Pretoria members tended to vote for the same candidates.<sup>1</sup> Thus the Pretoria members often played a disproportionate role in elections and referenda in general and Transvaal district committee and organising post elections in particular.<sup>2</sup>

As the 1940's progressed the Transvaal members in general tended increasingly to support the same candidates in executive council elections as the Pretoria members. The Transvaal members' voting strength enabled them to shape the outcome of a number of executive council elections during the latter 1940's.<sup>3</sup>

With the exception of the general secretary, H.F. Tyler, who was appointed by the A.S.W.'s executive council, the Society's delegates to the April 1947 T. & L.C. conference were elected by means of formal regional elections. The majority of the A.S.W.'s delegates at the conference held 'right-wing' views. However, the Transvaal delegate was the centrist, W.D. Arbuthnot, while the Western Cape representative was the left-leaning F.F.W. Stephan. Arbuthnot and Stephan adopted the extraordinary position of refusing to allow the A.S.W.'s block vote to be exercised in accordance

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1. The statistics and voting trend are derived from election results during the period under review. A.S.W.M.R., July 1944, January 1945, April 1945, January 1946, April 1947, July 1947, January 1948, May 1948, January 1949, October 1949, April 1951.
  2. A.S.W.M.R., July 1944, January 1945, January 1946, July 1947, January 1948, January 1949, October 1949.
  3. Ibid., July 1947, January 1948.

with the views of the majority of the Society's delegates. Consequently, the A.S.W. was obliged to abstain from voting when a few contentious resolutions were put to a block vote (e.g., a G.W.U. motion of no confidence in the outgoing national executive committee of the T. & L.C.; and a South African Iron, Steel and Kindred Trades Association motion to exclude black trade unions from the T. & L.C.). Beetge, who attended the conference as a delegate of the Pretoria Match Workers' Union, was one of the delegates who withdrew from the conference after the defeat of the South African Iron, Steel and Kindred Trades Association's motion.<sup>1</sup>

An election for two seats on the A.S.W.'s executive council was held at the close of 1947. Arbuthnot and all the other centrists who contested the election were defeated. On the other hand, Beetge, who had first secured election to the executive council in a by-election shortly after the T. & L.C.'s 1947 conference, successfully contested the election. However, it should be noted that Arbuthnot and another

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1. Ibid., July 1947; Minutes of the Annual Conference of the T. & L.C. 7, 8, 9, 10, 11 April 1947, Port Elizabeth, pp. 8, 10, 12-19, 31, 34, op.cit. The democratic character of South Africa's trade unions falls outside the scope of this study. However, in order to prevent an incorrect impression from being derived from the text, it must be stated that the A.E.U. was virtually the only other trade union whose delegates to the T. & L.C. conferences were regularly elected by the general members. Most of the delegates at the conferences were elected by their unions' executive councils. This information is derived from trade union archives and union journals. See the Selected Bibliography below. For information on Arbuthnot see p. 137 above.

centrist would easily have won the two seats if one excludes the Transvaal votes.<sup>1</sup> Beetge was later elected as the A.S.W.'s Transvaal delegate to the 1948 T. & L.C. conference.<sup>2</sup>

By the early 1950's almost no centrists contested executive council and Transvaal district committee elections.<sup>3</sup> Beetge, who it will be recalled resigned from the executive council in 1949, attempted in 1951 and 1952 to regain a seat on the executive council. Although he topped the polls in the Transvaal on both occasions he was unable to secure victory in either election.<sup>4</sup> A major factor which contributed to his defeats was the steadily decreasing proportion of the A.S.W.'s membership resident in the Transvaal.<sup>5</sup>

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1. A.S.W.M.R., July 1947, January 1948; Minutes of A.S.W.E.C. Meeting, 29 December 1947, op.cit.

2. A.S.W.M.R., March 1948.

3. Ibid., October 1949, April 1951, May 1952, April 1953.

4. Ibid., April 1951, May 1952.

5. See p. 125 above.

The struggle for control :

(D) The B.W.I.U.'s national elections

I have found little information on the B.W.I.U.'s elections during the 1940's. However, it is clear that from 1949 the Afrikaner nationalists organised 'anti-communist tickets' in the executive council elections. The Afrikaner nationalists engaged in canvassing among the Transvaal members.<sup>1</sup> The Union's Pretoria branch generally played a prominent role in the dissident activity.<sup>2</sup>

The Afrikaner nationalists fared poorly in the 1949 and 1950 executive council elections. Thus, for example, all the candidates who were supported by the Afrikaner nationalists were defeated in the 1950 executive council election - they fared particularly poorly outside the Transvaal. On the other hand, a notable centrist on the executive council, C. Jacobson, drew substantial support from even traditionally conservative areas such as Bloemfontein and easily secured re-election to the executive.<sup>3</sup>

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1. Judgment of Ramsbottom J., delivered 26 June 1951, P.J. Huyser vs. Die Werkerspers Uitgewers...Beperk, W.L.D., p. 7, op.cit.; W. Blake's, General Secretary, Report over Period June 1949 to June 1952 to A.U. of B.T.W. of S.A. Eleventh National Conference, July 1952, op.cit.
  2. J. Pretorius, Ex Additional Pretoria and District Organiser Inquiry. Documents Circulated to B.W.I.U. Executive Council Delegates, 14 November 1950, op.cit.; Minutes of B.W.I.U. Special E.C. Meeting, 24 June 1950. A.U. of B.T.W. of S.A. Archives.
  3. Minutes of B.W.I.U.E.C. Meeting, 14 October 1950. A.U. of B.T.W. of S.A. Archives. C. Jacobson, for example, supported the inclusion of black trade unions in the T. & L.C. (which was contrary to official Union policy), was a strong supporter of the T. & L.C. and a firm opponent of the N.P. government's repressive legislation. Minutes of B.W.I.U.E.C. Meeting, 4 February 1950, 20 November 1950. A.U. of B.T.W. of S.A. Archives; Minutes of T. & L.C.S.T.L.C.E.C. Meeting, 18 January 1951, op.cit.



After their poor performance in the 1950 executive council election the Afrikaner nationalists attempted to mobilise support among the B.W.I.U.'s members outside the Transvaal. A full-time organiser of the A.B.'s action committee, N.J. Deacon, spent a considerable period during 1951 visiting B.W.I.U. branches at Port Elizabeth, Grahamstown and on the Orange Free State goldfields.<sup>1</sup>

The non-Transvaal members remained loyal to the incumbent leadership. Thus, for instance, the incumbent general secretary, W. Blake, and national organiser, P.J. Huyser, were each faced with a single opponent in the mid-1952 election. Although the Afrikaner nationalists supported both opponents of the incumbent officials, it is unlikely that Blake's opponent, J. Reid, was an Afrikaner nationalist. While Blake and Huyser easily secured re-election to their posts, the results indicate that the incumbent officials would have been hard pressed to defeat their opponents if the ballot had been restricted to the Transvaal members.<sup>2</sup> The N.P. government used the Suppression of Communism Act to remove Huyser from his post during the latter half of 1953.<sup>3</sup>

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1. W. Blake's, General Secretary, Report over Period June 1949 to June 1952 to A.U. of B.T.W. of S.A. Eleventh National Conference, July 1952, op.cit.; Die Vaderland, 5 June 1951.
  2. Minutes of A.U. of B.T.W. of S.A.E.C. Meeting, 7 July 1952. A.U. of B.T.W. of S.A. Archives.
  3. W. Blake, General Secretary, A.U. of B.T.W. of S.A. to P.J. Huyser, 30 September 1953. T.U.C.S.A. Archives, DC 14.

## CHAPTER IV

CONCLUDING REMARKS OF PART ONE  
OF THE THESIS

O'Meara and Davies examined the Afrikaner nationalists' assaults on the individual trade unions up till the mid-1948 general election. However, by extending our analysis to the first six years of N.P. rule we have been able to identify more clearly a number of factors which militated against the Afrikaner nationalists' achieving success in their endeavours to gain control of the individual trade unions.

The non-white members of the various trade unions generally voted for their 'social democratic'/left-leaning leaders. However, the B.W.I.U.'s and the G.W.U.'s election results during the early 1950's indicate that neither leadership was dependent on their non-white members to secure their re-election to their posts.

The B.W.I.U.'s and the G.W.U.'s top officials would have been hard pressed to defeat their opponents during the early 1950's if the ballots had been restricted to their WHITE MEMBERS IN THE TRANSVAAL. On the other hand, the WHITE MEMBERS OUTSIDE THE TRANSVAAL tended to support their 'social democratic'/left-leaning leaders. The white members outside

the Transvaal were, of course, not necessarily more 'moderate' than their Transvaal colleagues and numerous factors contributed to their tendency to support the incumbent leaders. Thus, for example, the Afrikaner nationalists failed in general to mobilise their supporters outside the Transvaal and the only candidates known to the branch members were the incumbent leaders (the candidates were from the Transvaal).

The Johannesburg members of the various trade unions remained loyal to their 'social democratic'/left-leaning leaders to a much greater extent than their Witwatersrand and Pretoria colleagues. Nevertheless, the G.W.U. and the J.M.T.W.U. case-studies suggest that the Unions' Johannesburg members leaned increasingly towards the N.P. as the 1940's progressed.

The leaderships of the G.W.U. and the J.M.T.W.U. were predominantly Afrikaans. The simple constitutional features of the two unions facilitated the emergence of popular leaders. The (Johannesburg) members came into regular contact with their top officials at Johannesburg general meetings, etc., and in time came to identify their long-serving officials with their unions. E.S. Sachs and J.J. Venter were perceived by their members as being primarily responsible for the steady improvements obtained in the industrial agreements over the years. It will be recalled that the two trade unions negotiated on their own with their respective employers.

The simple constitutional features of the two unions also made it difficult for dissident Johannesburg members to acquire the necessary expertise successfully to challenge the incumbent leaders. The members were unlikely to dismiss a top official for his political views when there was no one suitably equipped to take his place.

The G.W.U.'s and the J.M.T.W.U.'s political/T. & L.C. activities did not directly affect their members. Consequently, the members were prepared to allow the leadership A DEGREE of latitude in their political/T. & L.C. activities. Thus Venter was able to retain his support base notwithstanding his insistence that the Union remain affiliated to the T. & L.C.

In contrast to the J.M.T.W.U. the G.W.U. supported the employment of non-whites in occupations performed by its white members, enrolled the eligible non-white workers on the Witwatersrand and enfranchised all the Union's members in 1953. Whatever their racial attitudes may have been, numerous (white) members probably sensed that the G.W.U.'s colour policy was designed to protect their positions and conditions of service in the industry. Although there was a gradual erosion of the G.W.U. leadership's support base in the Johannesburg area over the years, the Union administration retained the support of a considerable majority of the (white) Johannesburg members for much of the period under review.

The G.W.U.'s Germiston members turned increasingly against the Union administration. However, numerous factors weakened their influence in the G.W.U. (e.g., the bulk of the workers in the Witwatersrand clothing manufacturing industry were employed in the Johannesburg area, the governing branch system of government and the G.W.U. leadership's questionable conduct against the Germiston branch).

The large number of A.S.W. and B.W.I.U. branches in the Transvaal and the A.S.W.'s Transvaal district committee provided numerous opponents of the incumbent leaderships with firm support bases, etc. (the absence of a Transvaal district committee in the B.W.I.U. weakened the ability of opponents of the 'social democratic'/left-leaning leadership to popularise their names, etc.). The Transvaal organisers of the two unions who held Afrikaner nationalist/'right-wing' views were well placed to rally the members against the 'social democratic'/left-leaning leaders in the unions.

The A.S.W.'s and the B.W.I.U.'s members had little contact with their top officials and did not consider the officials as indispensable for their economic well-being (e.g., the bitter strike and the fact that the industrial agreements in the building industry were generally negotiated between the various building workers' trade unions on the one side and the employers' federation(s) on the other). Thus ideological considerations played an important role in determining the Transvaal members' support for the candidates in the various elections.

The executive councils of the A.S.W. and the B.W.I.U. generally contained a majority of English-speaking members. However, numerous factors weakened the Afrikaner nationalists' ability to mobilise the Transvaal members of the two unions behind their banner (e.g., a significant proportion of the Unions' members in the province were English-speaking, the unions opposed the training of blacks as building artisans and limited membership in the province to whites).

O'Meara's and Davies's undue reliance on the struggle in the M.W.U. probably contributed to their failure to grasp the relevance of factors such as systems of government and membership characteristics. While not denying the importance of the struggle in the M.W.U., it is clear from our case-studies that the struggle provided no explanatory 'model' for the Afrikaner nationalists' successes and failures to gain control of the individual trade unions.

Thus, for example, the M.W.U. had no branches on the Witwatersrand notwithstanding the fact that the bulk of its members were scattered over the Rand. The absence of branches weakened the ability of dissident miners to establish a beachhead in the Union. The M.W.U.'s structures (e.g., the absence of branches and the importance of the shaft representatives) thus virtually necessitated the establishment of a formal faction and the adoption of a strategy designed to dislodge the Union's leadership by mobilising the members

scattered over the Witwatersrand. The N.R.T. was able to provide the organisational base and the funds necessary for such a wide-ranging campaign.

Secondly, our examination indicates that Davies's generalisation about the bureaucratic character of South Africa's trade unions was invalid. We saw that the top officials of trade unions with simple constitutional structures such as the G.W.U. and the J.M.T.W.U. were not isolated from their members and that - particularly in the case of the G.W.U. - Johannesburg general meetings were often very well attended. Furthermore, contrary to the impression which may perhaps be derived from the work of Davies, we saw that the top officials of national trade unions such as the A.S.W. did not always serve on the various industrial councils. (It will be recalled that J.D. Hewitt, who represented the A.S.W. on the Witwatersrand and Pretoria building industry industrial council during the early 1940's, was a popularly elected lay member of the Society).

It will also be remembered that O'Meara argued that the supervisor/manual worker division was an important variable in any analysis of the Afrikaner nationalists' successes and failures in the individual unions. He considered that supervisors in general were a stratum of workers who were strongly receptive to christian-national trade union ideology. However, our examination of the G.W.U. showed that

the status needs of the Afrikaner garment workers - i.e., their sense of racial superiority - played an important role in swaying a significant number of them to support christian-national trade unionism and the N.P. In other words, our study of the G.W.U. suggests that the fact that both the white and non-white garment workers performed manual occupations did little per se to make the white garment workers less receptive than white supervisors to christian-national trade union ideology.

Furthermore, it will be remembered that we stated that Davies and O'Meara overemphasised the role of 'economic' factors and underplayed the importance of racial and ethnic factors in swaying workers to support christian-national trade unionism and the N.P. Thus, for example, our study of the G.W.U. showed that the white garment workers' opposition to Coloureds and Indians being employed in the same occupations as themselves was based more on a feeling of 'status reduction' than from any economic considerations (e.g., the fear of being eased out of the industry). And, as we have noted above, the status needs of the Afrikaner garment workers played an important role in swaying a significant number of them to support christian-national trade unionism and the N.P.



PART TWO

THE SOUTH AFRICAN TRADES AND  
LABOUR COUNCIL AND THE  
SOUTH AFRICAN LABOUR PARTY

(A)

THE SOUTH AFRICAN TRADES  
AND LABOUR COUNCIL

## CHAPTER V

THE ORIGINS OF THE SOUTH AFRICAN  
TRADES AND LABOUR COUNCIL

Thousands of immigrants, many of whom were from Britain, flocked to the Transvaal (then the Zuid Afrikaanse Republiek) after the discovery of gold in the Republic in the mid-1880's. The Republican authorities allowed the immigrant workers to establish trade unions and by the early 1890's a trade union federation had been formed, the Johannesburg and District Trades and Labour Committee. The Committee became defunct after the outbreak of the Anglo-Boer War.<sup>1</sup>

The Witwatersrand Trades and Labour Council, which was established in 1902, remained in existence for approximately a decade and was replaced by the Transvaal Federation of Trade Unions.<sup>2</sup> The Federation, which subsequently changed its name to the South African Industrial Federation, was essentially a

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1. For detailed accounts of the organised labour movement during the Republican period see F.J. Grobler, "Die Invloed van Geskoolde Blanke Arbeid op die Suid Afrikaanse Politiek van 1886 tot 1924", PhD. dissertation, University of Potchefstroom, 1968; David Ticktin, "The Origins of the South African Labour Party, 1888-1910", PhD. dissertation, University of Cape Town, 1973.
  2. D. Ticktin, op.cit., pp. 115-117; Elaine N. Katz, A Trade Union Aristocracy; A History of White Workers in the Transvaal and the General Strike of 1913, pp. 256-258, 262.

grouping of Transvaal and national trade unions.<sup>1</sup> The Federation, which attempted to encroach on the independence of its affiliates over the years, became largely defunct after the white miners' strike in early 1922.<sup>2</sup>

A number of trade unions in the Transvaal mining industry established the Associated Trade Unions of South Africa in mid-1922.<sup>3</sup> However, the only well-established trade union federation in South Africa during the first half of the 1920's was the Western Cape-based Cape Province Federation of Labour Unions (C.P.F.L.U.). The C.P.F.L.U. had a few affiliates in the Eastern Cape.<sup>4</sup>

It is well known that the N.P. and the L.P. entered into an electoral pact for the 1924 general election and subsequently formed a coalition government.<sup>5</sup> The new Minister of Labour and parliamentary leader of the L.P., F.H.P. Creswell, played a prominent role in the events which

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1. S.A. Industrial Federation Annual General Council Meeting, Pamphlet of Agenda of Meeting to be Held on 2 February 1919. T.U.C.S.A. Archives, BD 7-1.
  2. K.H. Williams, "The Resolution of Cape - Transvaal Conflict in the Trade Union Movement of South Africa", seminar paper, University of Oxford, 1974, p. 1; Anne O'Quigley, "The South African Industrial Federation, White Trade Unionism and the State 1913-1922", seminar paper, University of the Witwatersrand, 1978.
  3. Minutes of Meeting of the Joint Executives of the Mining Industry, 23 July 1922. T.U.C.S.A. Archives, BA 1-25; A.S.W.M.R., April 1923.
  4. Minutes of C.P.F.L.U.E.C. Meeting, 1922-1931. T.U.C.S.A. Archives.
  5. For information on the coalition government see pp. 243-249 below.

culminated in the establishment of the South African Association of Employees' Organisations in 1925.<sup>1</sup> The Association (which was renamed the South African Trades Union Congress (T.U.C.) in 1926) remained in existence until 1931. The C.P.F.L.U. declined to merge with the T.U.C. and the Congress's affiliates consisted essentially of a number of national and Transvaal-based trade unions. However, the T.U.C. was never able to mobilise the bulk of the Transvaal trade union movement behind its banner.<sup>2</sup>

It is clear that numerous trade unions were unhappy over, inter alia, the T.U.C.'s 'soft' colour policy and the fact that a few of the Congress's office bearer posts were held by communists. The T.U.C.'s constitution contained no colour bar and the Congress lobbied the coalition government to withdraw various bills such as the Native Administration Bill on the ground that they would hamper genuine black trade union activity. However, the T.U.C. never accepted a black trade union as an affiliate and in early 1928 rejected the Industrial and Commercial Workers' Union's (I.C.U.) application for affiliation.<sup>3</sup>

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1. A.S.W.M.R., September 1924; Minutes of the First Congress of the S.A. Association of Employees' Organisations, Johannesburg, 25, 26 March 1925, passim. T.U.C.S.A. Archives.
  2. Minutes of C.P.F.L.U.E.C. Meeting, 1924-1930, op.cit.; Minutes of the Annual Conference of the T.U.C. : Johannesburg, 2,3 April 1926, pp. 1-2; Cape Town, 15, 16, 17 April 1927, pp. 1-2; Johannesburg, 30, 31 March 1929, pp. 1-2; Johannesburg, 18, 19 April 1930, pp. 1-2, op.cit.
  3. Minutes of T.U.C.N.E.C. Meeting, 1925-1930. T.U.C.S.A. Archives; Report of Conference of T.U.C.N.E.C. with the Executives of Affiliated Unions, 11 September 1927. T.U.C.S.A. Archives, CA 1-3; A.E.U. East Rand Branch, Copy of Circular Sent to All South African Branches of the A.E.U., 23 May 1927. T.U.C.S.A. Archives, CC 1-2.

In 1930 the T.U.C. induced the parochially-minded C.P.F.L.U. to endorse its plan to convene a national 'all-in' conference of trade unions to consider the question of establishing a national trade union federation.<sup>1</sup> The conference, which was held in Cape Town in October 1930, was attended by representatives of thirty-eight trade unions. The conference resolved to establish a national trade union federation, the T. & L.C.<sup>2</sup>

The T.U.C. dissolved itself shortly after the conference and transferred its funds to the new federation; the C.P.F.L.U. declined to take any steps in this regard and in February 1931 a member of its executive launched a slashing attack on the T. & L.C. In August 1931 the T. & L.C., which had its headquarters in Johannesburg, established a local committee of the Council in the Western Cape to compete with the C.P.F.L.U.<sup>3</sup>

The C.P.F.L.U. split in 1941 and the larger section merged with the T. & L.C. in 1945.<sup>4</sup> Numerous factors contributed to the Federation's reluctance over the years to submerge its identity in a national trade union federation. In contrast to the position in the Transvaal the Coloured worker was fully integrated into the Western Cape labour movement

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1. Minutes of T.U.C.N.E.C. Meeting, 9 July 1930, 22 July 1930, 5 August 1930, 19 August 1930, 2 September 1930, op.cit.

2. K. Williams, op.cit., p. 5.

3. Ibid., pp. 6-8.

4. Ibid., pp. 13-14.

and the Western Cape trade unions had grave reservations about merging with the Transvaal trade union movement. In addition, the C.P.F.L.U. leaders feared that their positions would be undermined and that the Western Cape labour movement would be dominated by the numerically stronger Transvaal trade unions.<sup>1</sup>

Finally, it should be noted that there was no trade union federation in Natal at the dawn of the 1930's and the T. & L.C. successfully established a local committee in Durban in 1931.<sup>2</sup> Although a few autonomous trade union federations existed in the Eastern Cape during the 1930's and 1940's, they consisted essentially of branches of national trade unions. The T. & L.C. established a number of local committees in the Eastern Cape over the years.<sup>3</sup>

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1. The statements are based on a general impression of the material in the T.U.C.S.A. and the various trade union archives dealing with the unity issue and, in particular, on the minutes of the C.P.F.L.U.e.c. meetings. K. Williams's article on the T.U.C.'s and the T. & L.C.'s unity endeavours appears to have been based on rather limited research and the author, inter alia, underplayed the colour question in his analysis. See K. Williams, *op.cit.*, *passim*.
  2. Minutes of the T. & L.C. Durban Local Committee Meeting, 1931-1935, 1943-1953. T.U.C.S.A. Archives.
  3. Minutes of T. & L.C.N.E.C. Meeting, 28 August 1934, 3 November 1936, 3 May 1938, 4 December 1945, *op.cit.*; T. & L.C. Annual Report and Balance Sheet : 1942, p. 17; 1946, p. 6. T.U.C.S.A. Archives.

## CHAPTER VI

THE SOUTH AFRICAN TRADES AND LABOUR  
COUNCIL DURING THE 1930'sA. Membership Characteristics

The T. & L.C.'s constitution did not require trade unions to affiliate on their full memberships and, for example, a trade union with two thousand members was not obliged to affiliate to the Council on that figure. It could affiliate to the T. & L.C. on any membership between twenty and two thousand (although a trade union could theoretically apply for affiliation on less than twenty members the T. & L.C. was highly unlikely to accept such a trade union as an affiliate). The larger the affiliated membership the higher the affiliation dues and a trade union's affiliated membership was determined as much by its financial position as by its actual membership.<sup>1</sup> The T. & L.C.'s constitution contained no colour bar and by the close of 1938 approximately ten small black and Coloured/Indian trade unions were affiliated to the Council.<sup>2</sup>

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1. T. & L.C. Constitutions, as amended by the annual conferences, 1931-1939. T.U.C.S.A. Archives.
  2. T. & L.C. Constitutions, as amended by the annual conferences, 1931-1939, op.cit.; T. & L.C. Annual Report and Balance Sheet for 1938, pp. 49-50, op.cit.

Most of the T.U.C.'s former affiliates such as the B.W.I.U., the G.W.U., the I.M.S. and the J.M.T.W.U. affiliated to the T. & L.C. during the course of 1931. In addition, a number of other trade unions also affiliated to the Council during the year (e.g., the A.E.U., the S.A.T.U. and a few regional trade unions from the Cape).<sup>1</sup>

However, the T. & L.C.'s membership remained relatively static after 1931 and it was only from the mid-1930's that the Council's membership began to increase.<sup>2</sup> It will be noted from Table II that the number of trade unions affiliated to the T. & L.C. increased from thirty-three in late 1934 to fifty in late 1938 and that the Council's affiliated membership increased from 12 477 to 22 584 during this period. The Table also shows that the T. & L.C.'s craft union membership increased only slightly during this period and that the craft unions' share of the Council's affiliated membership decreased from just over half in late 1934 to only a third in late 1938.

A few trade unions affiliated to the T. & L.C. on large memberships during the second half of the 1930's.<sup>3</sup> Thus, for example, the M.W.U. affiliated to the T. & L.C. on 1 002

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1. T.U.C. Annual Report and Balance Sheet for 1930, p. 2, op.cit.; T. & L.C. Annual Report and Balance Sheet for the Period 1 November 1930 to 31 December 1931, p. 19, op.cit.
  2. T. & L.C. Annual Report and Balance Sheet : 1932, p. 33; 1933, p. 35; 1934, pp. 37-38; 1935, pp. 48-49, op.cit.
  3. Ibid., 1934, pp. 37-38; 1935, pp. 48-49; 1936, pp. 30-31; 1937, pp. 37-38; 1938, pp. 49-50.



TABLE II

ROUGH CLASSIFICATION OF THE SOUTH AFRICAN  
TRADES AND LABOUR COUNCIL'S AFFILIATES, 1934 AND 1938.<sup>1</sup>

CATEGORY OF TRADE UNIONS	NUMBER OF TRADE UNIONS		AFFILIATED MEMBERSHIP		THE AFFILIATED MEMBERSHIP AS A PERCENTAGE OF THE T. & L.C.'s TOTAL AFFILIATED MEMBERSHIP	
	Dec. 1934	Dec. 1938	Dec. 1934	Dec. 1938	Dec. 1934	Dec. 1938
CRAFT UNIONS	6	7	6867	7639	55,04	33,83
INDUSTRIAL UNIONS WHICH ENROLLED THE SEMI-SKILLED WORKERS IN THE VARIOUS MANU- FACTURING INDUSTRIES	12	18	1934	3885	15,5	17,2
INDUSTRIAL UNIONS WHICH ENROLLED THE WORKERS IN THE VARIOUS 'SERVICE' SECTORS OF THE ECONOMY (e.g., transport and the distribu- tive trade.)	14	23	2674	6073	21,43	26,89
MINING WORKERS' TRADE UNIONS	1	2	1002	4987	8,03	22,08
TOTAL	33	50	12477	22584		

1. The statistics are derived from the annual lists of affiliated trade unions.  
See T. & L.C. Annual Report and Balance Sheet : 1934, pp. 37-38; 1938, pp. 49-  
50, loose errata, op.cit.

members in December 1935 and the South African Association of Municipal Employees on 1 500 members in mid-1938.<sup>1</sup> However, many of the new affiliates affiliated to the T. & L.C. on small memberships and by late 1938 thirty-one trade unions were affiliated to the Council on memberships of two hundred or less.<sup>2</sup>

The T. & L.C.'s affiliates consisted largely of Transvaal and national trade unions. A number of regional trade unions from Natal and the Cape were affiliated to the Council.<sup>3</sup>

Finally, it should be noted that in terms of a regulation issued under the Public Service and Pensions Act in the early 1920's trade unions which were officially recognised by the Public Service Commission were prohibited from affiliating to trade union federations.<sup>4</sup> It would appear that the regulation was not strictly enforced during the 1940's.<sup>5</sup>

The railways were specifically excluded from the provisions of the Public Service and Pensions Act and I have been unable to ascertain whether a similar regulation applied to the

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1. Ibid., 1935, p. 49; Minutes of T. & L.C.N.E.C. Meeting, 31 December 1935, 5 July 1938, op.cit.
  2. T. & L.C. Annual Report and Balance Sheet for 1938, pp. 49-50, op.cit.
  3. Ibid., 1934, pp. 37-38; 1938, pp. 49-50.
  4. W.B. Norval, Private Secretary to Sir, 12 May 1926. T.U.C.S.A. Archives, CC 1-2.
  5. T. & L.C. Annual Report and Balance Sheet for 1945, pp. 2-4, op.cit.

railway workers' trade unions.<sup>1</sup> No railway workers' trade union, which was recognised by the railway administration, was ever affiliated to the T. & L.C. One or two non-white railway workers' trade unions, which were not recognised by the railway administration, were affiliated to the T. & L.C. over the years.<sup>2</sup>

#### B. System of Government

In terms of the T. & L.C.'s constitution the Council was a "consultative and co-ordinating" body which "shall act as the official voice of organised labour in South Africa". The constitution stipulated that

The Council shall not usurp any of the functions or authority of any of its affiliated bodies nor interfere in the domestic affairs of any such bodies... and shall enjoy only such powers in respect of any affiliated body as may be specially delegated to and conferred upon it by such body.<sup>3</sup>

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1. Public Service and Pensions Act, no. 27 of 1923, chap. 1, 1(8) ; Public Service and Pensions Amendment Act, no. 36 of 1936.
  2. T. & L.C. Annual Report and Balance Sheet, 1931-1954, op.cit.
  3. T. & L.C. Constitutions, as amended by the annual conferences, 1931-1939, sec. 4, op.cit.

The T. & L.C.'s policy was determined by the Council's annual conference.<sup>1</sup> Each affiliated trade union, which was in financial standing, was entitled to one conference delegate for every five hundred affiliated members or part thereof, with a maximum of seven delegates.<sup>2</sup> In terms of the constitution all conference resolutions were to be determined either by means of a show of hands or, if demanded by a single delegate, by means of a block vote. A trade union's block vote was equivalent to its affiliated membership.<sup>3</sup>

The constitution stipulated that all elections were to be decided by means of a ballot of the conference delegates. In other words, a block vote could not be demanded for the elections.<sup>4</sup> The president, the full-time secretary and the national executive committee (n.e.c.) were elected at the conference for a one year term of office. The new n.e.c. elected the vice-president, the treasurer and the two trustees from among the executive members.<sup>5</sup>

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1. Ibid., secs. 5(C) or 5(D).

2. Ibid., secs. 5(B) or 5(C).

3. Ibid., secs. 5(F) or 10(1)E.

4. Ibid.

5. Ibid., secs. 5(C), 5(D), 6(A), 6(B), 9(E).

C.                    The Leadership and the Balance of  
                          Power in the Council

A significant number of the small affiliates always failed to attend the T. & L.C. conferences.<sup>1</sup> The craft unions, the mining workers' trade unions and a handful of trade unions from the other two categories of unions in Table II tended to form a nebulous 'centre-right' bloc at the conferences. These trade unions generally dominated the T. & L.C. conferences and the n.e.c. during the 1930's. However, it should be noted that a few communists and other radicals attended the conferences as delegates of craft unions.<sup>2</sup>

With the exception of the provisional executive which was elected at the October 1930 'all-in' conference, no non-white was ever elected to the T. & L.C.n.e.c. English-speaking trade unionists comprised the bulk of both the T. & L.C. conference delegates and the n.e.c. members during the 1930's.<sup>3</sup>

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1. Compare the annual lists of affiliated trade unions with the attendance lists at the conferences. See T. & L.C. Annual Report and Balance Sheet: 1932, p. 33; 1933, p.35; 1934, pp.37-38; 1935, pp. 48-49; 1936, pp. 30-31; 1937, pp. 37-38; 1938, pp. 49-50; 1939, pp. 38-39, op.cit.; Minutes of the Annual Conference of the T. & L.C.: Port Elizabeth, 26, 27, 28 March 1932, pp. 1-2; Cape Town, 8, 9, 10, 11 April 1933, pp. 12-13; Johannesburg, 31 March, 1, 2, 3 April 1934, pp. 12-13; Durban, 20, 21, 22, 23, 24 April 1935, pp. 15-16; Cape Town, 13, 14, 15, 16, 17 April 1936, pp. 10-12; Port Elizabeth, 29, 30, 31 March, 1, 2 April 1937, pp. 1-2; East London, 18, 19, 20, 21, 22 April 1938, pp. 1-3; Kimberley, 10, 11, 12, 13, 14 April 1939, pp. 1-3, op.cit.
  2. See the T. & L.C. conference and n.e.c. meeting minutes generally, 1931-1939, op.cit.
  3. Ibid.; W.H. Andrews, Secretary, T. & L.C. to Lord Olivier, 12 November 1930. T.U.C.S.A. Archives, CC 3-3.

D. Some Policy Considerations and  
General Activities

The T. & L.C. conferences focused their attention during the 1930's on resolutions which called upon the government to introduce improved social-welfare and industrial legislation.<sup>1</sup> Thus, for example, a number of conferences passed resolutions which called upon the U.P. government to introduce an improved Factories Act which would make provision for shorter working hours, better maternity benefits, etc.<sup>2</sup>

The T. & L.C. conferences passed resolutions during the decade which endorsed the principle of equal pay for equal work irrespective of colour; called for blacks to be incorporated into the Industrial Conciliation Act's machinery; and requested the government to repeal all legislation which hampered genuine black trade union activity.<sup>3</sup> However, a number of resolutions which called for the introduction of a ratio provision between the white and non-white workers employed on the Witwatersrand gold-mines were passed at

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1. See Minutes of the Annual Conference of the T. & L.C., 1931-1939, op.cit.
  2. Ibid. : Port Elizabeth, 29, 30, 31 March, 1, 2 April 1937, pp. 50, 52; East London, 18, 19, 20, 21, 22 April 1938, p. 87; Kimberley, 10, 11, 12, 13, 14 April 1939, pp. 72-74, 105-106.
  3. Ibid. : Durban, 4, 5, 6 April 1931, p. 44, annexure of proposed conference resolutions p. 6; Port Elizabeth, 26, 27, 28 March 1932, p. 36; Cape Town, 13, 14, 15, 16, 17 April 1936, pp. 83-84, 87; East London, 18, 19, 20, 21, 22 April 1938, pp. 72-73; Kimberley, 10, 11, 12, 13, 14 April 1939, pp. 151-153.

conferences during the early 1930's.<sup>1</sup> The T. & L.C.n.e.c. during the 1930's ignored the question of colour when it considered applications by trade unions for affiliation.<sup>2</sup>

The T. & L.C. submitted memoranda to and/or gave evidence before numerous parliamentary select committees and government commissions which were investigating social-welfare and/or industrial issues.<sup>3</sup> The T. & L.C. also provided its affiliates with various forms of assistance. For example, the Council gave evidence before the Wage Board; circularised trade unions for funds for affiliates involved in industrial disputes; assisted in organisational activities; and mediated in jurisdictional disputes between affiliates.<sup>4</sup>

The T. & L.C. published a journal between 1931 and 1936, the Trades and Labour Journal of South Africa. The Journal had a small circulation and was constantly in financial difficulty.<sup>5</sup>

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1. Ibid. : Port Elizabeth, 26, 27, 28 March 1932, p. 36, annexure of proposed conference resolutions (n.p.); Cape Town, 8, 9, 10, 11 April 1933, pp. 57-58; Minutes of T. & L.C.N.E.C. Meeting, 14 July 1931, op.cit.
  2. Minutes of T. & L.C.N.E.C. Meeting, 1931-1940, op.cit.
  3. Ibid., 30 April 1931, 19 May 1931, 9 August 1932, 28 August 1934, 26 February 1935, 26 January 1937, 9 February 1937, 23 February 1937.
  4. Ibid., 17 November 1931, 1 December 1931, 9 August 1932, 28 March 1933, 16 January 1934, 28 August 1934, 11 September 1934, 21 May 1935, 27 August 1935, 10 September 1935, 28 July 1936, 11 August 1936, 6 October 1936, 20 October 1936, 8 February 1938, 12 April 1938, 18 October 1938, 29 November 1938, 28 March 1939, 9 April 1939.
  5. Ibid., 18 December 1934, 8 January 1935; Trades and Labour Journal of South Africa, 1931-1936.

E. Political Policy and Relations with  
the 'Fusion' Government

The T. & L.C. conferences rejected numerous resolutions which dealt with political issues. For example, the conferences consistently refused during the 1930's either to sanction the establishment of a "political wing" of the T. & L.C. to contest parliamentary elections or to endorse any resolution which expressed support for the L.P.<sup>1</sup>

The T. & L.C. issued a questionnaire to all the candidates in the 1933 general election and published the returns in a tabulated form in the Trades and Labour Journal of South Africa. Needless to say, the L.P. endorsed the T. & L.C.'s social-welfare and industrial proposals to a far greater extent than the handful of N.P. and South African Party candidates who replied to the questionnaire.<sup>2</sup>

The T. & L.C. did not put its weight behind the L.P. in the mid-1938 general election. Indeed, A.A. Moore (the general secretary of the South African Reduction Workers' Association

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1. Minutes of the Annual Conference of the T. & L.C. : Durban, 4, 5, 6 April 1931, pp. 27-32; Port Elizabeth, 26, 27 March 1932, pp. 17-19, annexure of proposed conference resolutions (n.p.); Cape Town, 8, 9, 10, 11 April 1933, pp. 44-54; Johannesburg, 31 March, 1, 2, 3, April 1934, pp. 66-70; Durban, 20, 21, 22, 23, 24 April 1935, pp. 68-71; Port Elizabeth, 29, 30, 31 March, 1, 2 April 1937, pp. 63-64; East London, 18, 19, 20, 21, 22 April 1938, p. 92; Kimberley, 10, 11, 12, 13, 14 April 1939, pp. 135-146, op.cit.
  2. Minutes of T. & L.C.N.E.C. Meeting, 25 April 1933, op.cit.; Trades and Labour Journal of South Africa, July 1933.



and the president of the T. & L.C.) stated in his keynote address to the annual conference of the T. & L.C. in early 1938 that "the immediate issue confronting the workers is not that of Labour versus Capitalism, but that of Democracy versus Dictatorship" and implicitly called upon all workers to support the U.P. in the general election.<sup>1</sup> Furthermore, a resolution which proposed that a questionnaire be issued to all the candidates in the election was defeated at the conference by twenty-two votes to twenty. The motion had been moved with the objective of rallying support for the L.P.<sup>2</sup>

The T. & L.C. enjoyed a sound relationship with the U.P. government over the years.<sup>3</sup> Thus, for example, the U.P. government agreed to a T. & L.C. request in 1936 that the administration waive the legal costs incurred by E.S. Sachs and I. Diamond in the early 1930's when the two had unsuccessfully appealed to the courts to have their banishment orders set aside. In late 1932 Sachs together with four members of the C.P. (I. Diamond, E. Roux, J. Kalk and D. Wolton) had been banished from the Witwatersrand for a year under the Riotous Assemblies Act for allegedly creating hostility between the races. Sachs had returned to his post as general secretary of the G.W.U. after a three months

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1. Minutes of the Annual Conference of the T. & L.C., East London, 18, 19, 20, 21, 22 April 1938, pp. 12-13, op.cit.

2. Ibid., pp. 91-92.

3. Minutes of T. & L.C.N.E.C. Meeting, 1934-1940, op.cit.

vacation in Britain. Although Sachs's return to Johannesburg had been a clear breach of his banishment order, the authorities had not taken any action against him.<sup>1</sup>

F. In Defence of the Trade  
Union Movement

Although the T. & L.C. was reluctant to become embroiled in political activity it attempted to defend the rights and privileges of the trade union movement. The T. & L.C.'s endeavours to protect the trade union movement operated at two levels. At the one level, the T. & L.C. opposed any attempts by the state to encroach on the civil liberties of the workers.

Thus, for example, in 1933 the Commissioner of Customs clamped down on the general importation of communist literature. Although the T. & L.C. successfully challenged the

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1. Ibid., 28 July 1936; Hansard, Assembly Debates, vol. 28, 15 February 1937, cols. 1679-1699; B.M. Touyz, op.cit., pp. 63, 65.

The 1932 general strike in the Witwatersrand clothing manufacturing industry occurred at a time when General J.B. Hertzog's N.P. was faced with an important parliamentary by-election in the Germiston constituency (Germiston was, of course, an important clothing manufacturing centre). Although the strike appeared to be on the verge of fizzling out, the Witwatersrand clothing manufacturers agreed to the government's proposal that the question of a reduction in the wage rates be submitted to an arbitrator to be appointed by the government. The arbitrator, the chief magistrate of Johannesburg (H. Britten), granted the maximum reduction in the wages stipulated in his terms of reference (i.e., 10 per cent). Sachs's banishment was interpreted by some as part of the quid pro quo between the clothing manufacturers and the government for the settlement of the dispute. B.M. Touyz, op.cit., pp. 59-64.

legality of the Commissioner's action in the Witwatersrand Local Division of the Supreme Court in late 1933, the 'fusion' government amended the relevant act in early 1934 to enable the Commissioner to confiscate any imported literature he wished.<sup>1</sup>

At the other level, the T. & L.C. attempted to combat fascism, nazism and christian-national trade unionism. The first half of the 1930's witnessed the brutal suppression of the trade union movement in Nazi Germany and the annual conference of the T. & L.C. in early 1935 instructed the incoming n.e.c. to launch a boycott of all German manufactured goods.<sup>2</sup> The T. & L.C.n.e.c. duly appointed a sub-committee to conduct the boycott campaign. The sub-committee, which remained in existence for over a year, approached more than a hundred firms on the Witwatersrand and apparently achieved some success in its endeavours to persuade the firms not to import German goods. The sub-committee also established regional boycott committees in Cape Town, Durban, East London and Port Elizabeth.<sup>3</sup>

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1. Minutes of T. & L.C.N.E.C. Meeting, 24 October 1933, op.cit.; Minutes of T. & L.C.N.E.C. Standing Committee Meeting, 18 September 1933, op.cit.; Minutes of T. & L.C. National Committee Formed to Deal with the Confiscation of Literature, 6 December 1933. T.U.C.S.A. Archives, DA 2; Minutes of T. & L.C. National Citizens' Rights Committee Meeting, 12 July 1934, 24 July 1934. T.U.C.S.A. Archives, DA 2. For information on the 'fusion' government's amendment in 1934 see p. 261 below.
  2. Minutes of the Annual Conference of the T. & L.C., Durban, 20, 21, 22, 23, 24 April 1935, pp. 53-58, op.cit.
  3. Ibid., Port Elizabeth, 29, 30, 31 March, 1, 2 April 1937, p. 22; T. & L.C. Annual Report and Balance Sheet for 1935, pp. 25-26, op.cit.; Minutes of the T. & L.C.N.E.C. Meeting, 18 June 1935, op.cit.; Minutes of T. & L.C. Non-Sectarian Boycott Committee Meeting, 8 July 1935, 29 July 1935, 20 August 1935, 11 September 1935, 25 October 1935, 28 November and 2 December 1935, 12 December 1935, 19 March 1936, 1 September 1936. T.U.C.S.A. Archives, DA 2.

The first half of the 1930's also witnessed the emergence of small fascist organisations in South Africa and the annual conference of the T. & L.C. in early 1934 instructed the incoming n.e.c. to establish an organisation to combat fascism in the country.<sup>1</sup> A number of trade unions and organisations such as the G.W.U., the South African Reduction Workers' Association (S.A.R.W.A.), the C.P. and the Lenin Club attended the inaugural conference of the Anti-Fascist League (A.F.L.) in August 1934.<sup>2</sup> The T. & L.C.n.e.c. granted the League full autonomy in October 1934.<sup>3</sup>

The L.P. and many of the trade unions from the nebulous 'centre-right' bloc of T. & L.C. affiliates such as the A.E.U. declined to support the A.F.L. and the League was dominated from its inaugural conference by communists and other radicals. Although a few 'centre-right' trade unions such as the S.A.R.W.A. initially supported the A.F.L., they grew increasingly disenchanted over the left-wing character of the League's leadership and in time discontinued their active support for the League.<sup>4</sup>

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1. Minutes of the Annual Conference of the T. & L.C., Johannesburg, 31 March, 1, 2, 3 April 1934, p. 73, op.cit.
  2. Minutes of the Anti-Fascist Conference, Johannesburg, 19 August 1934. T.U.C.S.A. Archives, DA 2. It should be noted that the S.A.R.W.A.'s membership was probably predominantly English-speaking. See the S.A. Population Census, 7 May 1946, vol. 5, p. 43 table 3, op.cit.
  3. Minutes of T. & L.C.N.E.C. Meeting, 9 October 1934, op.cit.
  4. Ibid., 28 August 1934, 25 April 1939; Minutes of the Anti-Fascist Conference, Johannesburg, 19 August 1934, op.cit.; Minutes of the Anti-Fascist Committee Meeting, 16 September 1934. T.U.C.S.A. Archives, DA 2; Report of the First S.A. National Conference Against Fascism and War, Durban, 19, 21 April 1935. T.U.C.S.A. Archives, DC 12-2; Report of the Second S.A. National Congress Against Fascism and War, Johannesburg, 14, 15, 16 December 1935. T.U.C.S.A. Archives, DC 12-2; Minutes of the Annual Conference of the T. & L.C., Kimberley, 10, 11, 12, 13, 14 April 1939, pp. 93-96, op.cit. For the L.P.'s stand on the A.F.L. see pp. 260-261 below.

The A.F.L.'s activities gradually declined over the years and by the close of 1937 the League had become virtually defunct. The League engaged in a number of propaganda campaigns in Natal, the Western Cape and the Transvaal. It organised public and factory meetings, distributed leaflets and disrupted public meetings of the fascist-oriented Grey-shirt organisation.<sup>1</sup>

One of the A.F.L.'s campaigns was launched shortly before the September 1936 Transvaal provincial council election. The fascist-oriented Blackshirt organisation nominated candidates to contest five seats in the rural areas of the Transvaal (i.e., Bethal, Carolina, Emerlo, Wakkerstroom and Witbank). The A.F.L. despatched a team to campaign against the Blackshirts in the Eastern Transvaal and H. Cornelius (who, it will be recalled, was a left-leaning cadre member of the G.W.U.) subsequently submitted the following report on the campaign:

On the 21st August, we arrived in Witbank, where we resided during our campaign. Dr. Maselle gave us his car in which to drive to Balmoral, which is seventeen miles from Witbank. At Balmoral Bar we met some of the mine workers, gave them pamphlets, and explained to them our objects....

At Oogies, we held our meeting in the Hotel, where we met Mr. Higgs, Secretary of the United Party. He advised us to speak from their platform,

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1. Report of the First S.A. National Conference Against Fascism and War, Durban, 19, 21 April 1935, pp. 5-7, 9-11, op.cit.; Report of the Second S.A. National Congress Against Fascism and War, Johannesburg, 14, 15, 16 December 1935, pp. 4-5, op.cit.; The Campaign in the Transvaal. Reports by H. Cornelius and T. du Plooy (1936). G.W.U. Archives, EBB 7; Minutes of the Annual Conference of the T. & L.C., Kimberley, 10, 11, 12, 13, 14 April 1939, p. 94, op.cit.; Minutes of T. & L.C.N.E.C. Meeting, 8 October 1935, 5 November 1935, 9 November 1935, 3 December 1935, op.cit.

but we refused point blank. We pointed out to him that we are not friends with the United Party, but are here to oppose the Blackshirts. The audience consisted mainly of English-speaking people, and the majority were members of the United Party....

We [then] decided to go to the strongholds of the Blackshirts, and consequently held meetings at Kendall, Leslie, Hendrina and Davel. The Blackshirts attended in an organised body, and tried to take over our platform, but we managed to address our meetings and to keep the floor....

We could also have held a successful meeting at Emerlo were it not for the fact that certain leaflets were sent out from Johannesburg to individuals, condemning the character of the Black-shirt candidate, Mr. Smit. Mr. Smit is well known throughout the district, and the Indian mentioned in the pamphlet had tried to squeeze money out of more poor people.... We received a message from sympathisers of Emerlo to the effect that the Blackshirts decided to smash up the meeting and to score a victory over the Anti-Fascists....

[The meeting was cancelled.]<sub>1</sub>

Although all their candidates were soundly defeated by the U.P., the Blackshirts polled 3 519 votes in the election. The Blackshirt candidate in Witbank polled 416 votes to the U.P.'s 1 867 while the Blackshirt candidate in Emerlo polled 1 022 votes to the U.P.'s 2 045.<sup>2</sup>

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1. The Campaign in the Transvaal. Report by H. Cornelius, op.cit.
  2. H.B. Kruger, op.cit., pp. 136-140. The N.P. did not nominate candidates in four of the five seats which the Blackshirts contested. The U.P. polled 1 798 votes in the Bethal constituency, the Blackshirts 591 and the N.P. 469. H.B. Kruger, op.cit., pp. 136-140. For information on the N.P.'s performance in the election see p. 265 Table V below.

The T. & L.C. played a prominent role in the establishment of a new anti-fascist organisation in 1938, the League for the Maintenance of Democracy. Although the League remained in existence for a number of years, it would appear that the League engaged in very little activity.<sup>1</sup>

While the T. & L.C. viewed the emergence of christian-national trade unionism with concern, the Council failed to establish an organisation to co-ordinate opposition to the activities of the Afrikaner nationalist trade union activists. The T. & L.C. organised two conferences of trade union executives in 1939 to discuss and review the trade union movement's strategy against the Afrikaner nationalist activists.<sup>2</sup> The conferences did not always have the desired result as the following extract from an I.M.S. executive council meeting in August 1939 illustrates:

Bro. Waddell stated he wished to criticise the composition of the [conference]. He was surprised to find natives, coloureds and whites in the same meeting room. Considerable criticism had been levelled against legislation, Agreements, Industrial Councils and the Government. It was no wonder that Dr. Hertzog was launching an attack [on the trade union movement] and he was inclined to support the Doctor. He personally would never

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1. Minutes of T. & L.C.N.E.C. Meeting, 25 January 1938, 15 February 1938, 17 May 1938, 7 June 1938, 4 February 1941, op.cit.; Minutes of Adjourned Quarterly Meeting of the Council of the Democratic League, 6 May 1943. T.U.C.S.A. Archives, DC 11-6.
  2. Minutes of T. & L.C.N.E.C. Meeting, 21 February 1939, 22 March 1939, 15 August 1939, 29 August 1939, op.cit.; T. & L.C. Annual Report and Balance Sheet for 1939, pp. 29-30, op.cit.; Minutes of the Annual Conference of the T. & L.C., Kimberley, 10, 11, 12, 13, 14 April 1939, pp. 147, 150, op.cit.

attend another meeting of that kind again. He considered that craft unions should separate themselves from such bodies.

Bro. Kruger stated he was inclined to agree with Bro. Waddell in the views expressed.

The Secretary [H. Boyder, a sympathiser of the L.P.] stated he did not wish to comment at length, but could only express surprise at the lamentable lack of knowledge of the trade union movement as expressed by the members concerned.<sup>1</sup>

In 1938 the T. & L.C. assisted the weak Textile Workers' Industrial Union to ward off an assault by the Afrikaner nationalists. While I have no hard evidence it would appear that the N.R.T. funded the Afrikaner nationalists' organisational campaign among the textile workers in Johannesburg and the 'rural' Western Cape. The Afrikaner nationalists denounced the Textile Workers' Industrial Union as a gang of 'communists and Jews' and established a christian-national trade union for the Afrikaner workers employed at a large Johannesburg textile factory. The T. & L.C.n.e.c. appointed J.J. Venter (the lay president of the J.M.T.W.U.) as a temporary full-time organiser and Venter spent two weeks campaigning among the Johannesburg textile workers. The christian-national trade union failed to secure registration under the Industrial Conciliation Act and duly faded from the scene.<sup>2</sup>

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1. Minutes of I.M.S.E.C. Meeting, 24 August 1939, op.cit. It will be recalled that the I.M.S. used the governing branch system of government and that the Johannesburg branch executive functioned jointly as a branch executive and union executive council. See pp. 41-42 above.
  2. Minutes of T. & L.C.N.E.C. Meeting, 5 July 1938, 12 July 1938, 19 July 1938, 26 July 1938, 16 August 1938, 30 August 1938, 20 September 1938, op.cit.



## CHAPTER VII

## THE YEARS OF INFLUENCE : 1939-1948

A. Membership Characteristics

It will be noted from Table III that the number of trade unions affiliated to the T. & L.C. almost doubled during the first half of the 1940's. Thus the number of trade unions affiliated to the T. & L.C. increased from fifty-three in late 1939 to ninety-five in late 1945 and the Council's affiliated membership increased from 23 687 to 63 978 during this period.

However, forty-six of the ninety-five trade unions affiliated to the T. & L.C. in late 1945 were affiliated on memberships of two hundred or less.<sup>1</sup> A number of trade unions such as the Motor Industry Employees' Union, the South African Engine Drivers' and Firemen's Association and the South African Society of Bank Officials affiliated to the T. & L.C. on relatively large memberships during the early 1940's. It should also be noted that the G.W.U.

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1. T. & L.C. Annual Report and Balance Sheet for 1945, pp. 2-4, op.cit.

TABLE III

ROUGH CLASSIFICATION OF THE SOUTH AFRICAN TRADES  
AND LABOUR COUNCIL'S AFFILIATES, 1939, 1945 and 1946.<sup>1</sup>

CATEGORY OF TRADE UNIONS	NUMBER OF TRADE UNIONS			AFFILIATED MEMBERSHIP			THE AFFILIATED MEMBERSHIP AS A PERCENTAGE OF THE T. & L.C.'s TOTAL AFFILIATED MEMBERSHIP		
	Dec. 1939	Dec. 1945	Dec. 1946	Dec. 1939	Dec. 1945	Dec. 1946	Dec. 1939	Dec. 1945	Dec. 1946
CRAFT UNIONS	9	12	13	9007	14367	48942	38,03	22,46	29,06
INDUSTRIAL UNIONS WHICH ENROLLED THE SEMI-SKILLED WORKERS IN THE VARIOUS MANUFACTU- RING INDUSTRIES	21	42	47	4030	19207	42070	17,01	30,02	24,98
INDUSTRIAL UNIONS WHICH ENROLLED THE WORKERS IN THE VARIOUS 'SERVICE' SECTORS OF THE ECONOMY (e.g., transport and the distribu- tive trade.)	21	36	51	5643	16625	51716	23,82	25,98	30,7
MINING WORKERS' TRADE UNIONS	2	5	4	5007	13779	25704	21,14	21,54	15,26
TOTAL	53	95	115	23687	63978	168432			

1. The statistics are derived from the annual lists of affiliated trade unions.  
See T. & L.C. Annual Report and Balance Sheet: 1939, pp. 38-39; 1945, pp. 2-4;  
1946, pp. 2-4, op.cit.

and the M.W.U. increased their affiliated memberships from 1 200 and 3 004 in late 1939 to 9 165 and 10 000 in late 1945 respectively.<sup>1</sup>

The annual conference of the T. & L.C. in early 1946 approved a constitutional amendment which required affiliates to affiliate to the Council on their full memberships<sup>2</sup> (the provision was never strictly enforced). It will be noted from Table III that 115 trade unions were affiliated to the T. & L.C. on a membership of 168 432 in late 1946. The Table also shows that the new method of affiliation had little influence on the balance of power in the T. & L.C. Thus the mining workers' trade unions and the craft unions accounted for 44 per cent of the T. & L.C.'s affiliated membership in both late 1945 and late 1946.

A steady stream of regional trade unions from the Cape and Natal affiliated to the T. & L.C. over the years.<sup>3</sup> In addition, it will be recalled that the larger section of the C.P.F.L.U. merged with the T. & L.C. in 1945.<sup>4</sup> In late 1946 approximately fifty-four regional trade unions from Natal and the Cape were affiliated to the T. & L.C. on a membership of just under thirty thousand.<sup>5</sup>

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1. T. & L.C. Annual Report and Balance Sheet: 1938, pp. 49-50; 1939, pp. 38-39; 1940, pp. 36-37; 1941, pp. 24-25; 1942, pp. 4-5; 1943, pp. 22-23; 1944, pp. 3-4; 1945, pp. 2-4; 1946, pp. 2-4, op.cit.

2. Ibid., 1946, p.2. The affiliation dues per affiliated member were naturally reduced.

3. T. & L.C. Annual Report and Balance Sheet: 1938, pp. 49-50; 1939, pp. 38-39; 1940, pp. 36-37; 1941, pp. 24-25; 1942, pp. 4-5; 1943, pp. 22-23; 1944, pp. 3-4; 1945, pp. 2-4; 1946, pp. 2-4, op.cit.

4. See p. 158 above.

5. The statistics are derived from the annual list of affiliated trade unions. See T. & L.C. Annual Report and Balance Sheet for 1946, pp. 2-4, op.cit.

Approximately eight black trade unions were affiliated to the T. & L.C. during the war years. However, the number of black affiliates decreased during the second half of the 1940's. There were approximately twelve exclusively Coloured/Indian trade unions affiliated to the T. & L.C. during the decade.<sup>1</sup>

B. System of Government and the Balance  
of Power in the Council

It will be recalled that the craft unions, the mining workers' trade unions and a handful of trade unions from the other two categories of unions in Table II tended to form a nebulous 'centre-right' bloc at the T. & L.C. conferences during the 1930's. This relatively small group of trade unions dominated the Council during the decade.<sup>2</sup>

It will be noted from Tables II and III that the bulk of the T. & L.C.'s new affiliates during the 1930's and 1940's consisted of trade unions which enrolled either the semi-skilled workers employed in the various manufacturing

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1. The statements are based on an analysis of the annual lists of affiliated trade unions. See T. & L.C. Annual Report and Balance Sheet: 1940, pp. 36-37; 1941, pp. 24-25; 1942, pp. 4-5; 1943, pp. 22-23; 1944, pp. 3-4; 1945, pp. 2-4; 1946, pp. 2-4; 1947, pp. 4-6, op.cit.
  2. See p. 166 above.

industries or the workers employed in the various 'service' sectors of the economy.<sup>1</sup> Many of the new affiliates tended to support the T. & L.C.'s nebulous 'left-wing' bloc and the proportion of the Council's affiliates which supported the 'left-wing' bloc steadily increased over the years.<sup>2</sup>

It will be remembered that a block vote could not be demanded for the T. & L.C.'s elections and that all elections were decided by means of a ballot of the conference delegates.<sup>3</sup> Although a significant number of the small affiliates which leaned in favour of the 'left-wing' bloc failed to attend the T. & L.C. conferences, it became increasingly apparent as the 1930's drew to a close that the method of electing the Council's n.e.c. would have to be changed if the 'centre-right' trade unions were to retain their dominant position on the n.e.c.<sup>4</sup>

It was against this background that the annual conference of the T. & L.C. in March 1940 approved a constitutional amendment which provided for the introduction of the block vote in the 1940 and all subsequent elections. It would appear that the craft unions and unions such as the S.A.R.W.A. wished to ensure that the new T. & L.C.n.e.c. supported South Africa's participation in the war on Britain's side and feared

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1. For Tables II and III see pp. 162 and 179 respectively.

2. Minutes of the Annual Conference of the T. & L.C., 1931-1950, op.cit.

3. See p. 165 above.

4. Minutes of the Annual Conference of the T. & L.C., 1931-1939, op.cit.: See also p. 166 footnote 1 above.

that many of the conference delegates from the small affiliates would vote for the communist/radical/Afrikaner candidates who opposed the war effort.<sup>1</sup> While we shall examine the T. & L.C.'s war policy in the following section it must be noted at this stage that the communist and radical trade unionists came out in full support of the war effort after Hitler had invaded the Soviet Union in 1941.<sup>2</sup>

The 'centre-right' bloc at the T. & L.C. conferences during the 1940's consisted largely of the bulk of the craft unions, the mining workers' trade unions and a few trade unions such as the South African Society of Bank Officials (S.A.S.B.O.) and the South African Association of Municipal Employees which were affiliated to the Council on relatively large memberships.<sup>3</sup> The 'centre-right' bloc accounted for a solid majority of the T. & L.C.'s affiliated membership until the close of the 1940's.<sup>4</sup>

The 'left-wing' bloc focused its attention during the 1940's on lobbying certain trade unions from the 'centre-right' bloc such as the A.E.U. and the S.A.S.B.O. to support or oppose specific resolutions at the conferences. The lobbying and factionalism in the T. & L.C. is illustrated by the following extract from a letter written in early 1947 by E.S. Sachs (the general secretary of the G.W.U.) to his friend

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1. Minutes of the Annual Conference of the T. & L.C., Cape Town, 25, 26, 27, 28, 29 March 1940, pp. 33-41, op.cit.
  2. Ibid., Port Elizabeth, 6, 7, 8, 9, 10 April 1942, pp. 7-8, 36, 38-39; Minutes of T. & L.C.N.E.C. Meeting, 9 September 1941, op.cit.
  3. Minutes of the Annual Conference of the T. & L.C., 1940-1949, op.cit.
  4. The statement is based on an analysis of the annual lists of affiliated trade unions. See T. & L.C. Annual Report and Balance Sheet: 1940, pp. 36-37; 1941, pp. 24-25; 1942, pp. 4-5; 1943, pp. 22-23; 1944, pp. 3-4; 1945, pp. 2-4; 1946, pp. 2-4; 1947, pp. 4-6; 1948, pp. 42-44; 1949, pp. 37-41, op.cit.

and confidant, the communist, W.H. Andrews:

So far as the T. & L.C. conference is concerned I am confident that if the 'left' cooperate wholeheartedly and if we make sure that all our delegates will be at the conference, the reactionaries will suffer a complete defeat. ...the A.E.U. will probably hold the balance of power, but we have done some work and I am assured that instructions will be issued to the delegates to vote against the [block] vote. Haldane, of the Bank Officials also told me that his Union will vote against the [block] vote for the election of the n.e.c. An effort is being made to keep the Miners away from the conference or at least to keep their votes neutral. I am not very confident about Botha and co. [i.e., the M.W.U.].

Except for one or two minor disagreements there has been very cordial cooperation between us and the C.P. comrades.... I should like your view on ... who should be put up as President? Jan Venter [the president of the J.M.T.W.U.] is not prepared to stand for president and at any rate Jan is often very difficult. At a meeting of progressives it was decided to nominate Haldane who in recent months has shown a more progressive attitude but he cannot be trusted implicitly.<sup>1</sup>

The nebulous 'left-wing' bloc at the T. & L.C. conferences during the 1940's favoured a relatively tolerant/'soft' colour policy and pressed for the adoption of an aggressive

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1. Solly Sachs to Bill (W.H. Andrews), 26 March 1947. G.W.U. Archives, BCE 2-1

industrial policy - the policy differences between the two blocs will become clearer during the course of the chapter. We have already stated that a large majority of the T. & L.C.'s affiliates leaned in favour of the 'left-wing' bloc during the decade.<sup>1</sup> It must be noted that the majority of the trade unions which were affiliated to both the L.P. and the T. & L.C. tended to support the 'left-wing' bloc at the Council's conferences. Thus, for example, the Motor Industry Employees' Union and the Concession Stores and Allied Trades Assistants' Union leaned in favour of the 'left-wing' bloc while the South African Cinematograph Operators' Union supported the 'centre-right' bloc.<sup>2</sup>

Numerous attempts were made by the 'left-wing' bloc during the 1940's to have the block vote in elections either abolished or at least modified. The 'centre-right' trade unions vigorously defended the status quo and acrimonious debates occurred at the annual conferences of the T. & L.C.<sup>3</sup>

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1. See pp. 181-182 above.

2. Minutes of the Annual Conference of the T. & L.C., 1940-1949, op.cit. The Concession Stores and Allied Trades Assistants' Union was a Transvaal trade union which enrolled the white workers employed in restaurants, stores, etc., which catered for a black clientele. The Union's membership, until at least the latter 1930's, consisted largely of Jewish immigrants from Eastern Europe. The Motor Industry Employees' Union was a mixed national trade union which enrolled the mechanics employed in service stations, etc. B. Weinbren's evidence. File vol. 13, 18 September 1934, Johannesburg, pp. 1421, 1430-1432, in "Proceedings of the Industrial Legislation Commission", op.cit. For further information on the L.P.'s affiliates see p. 273 Table VI.

3. Minutes of the Annual Conference of the T. & L.C.: Durban, 14, 15, 16, 17, 18 April 1941, pp. 47-51, 60-67; Port Elizabeth, 6, 7, 8, 9, 10 April 1942, pp. 14-17; Johannesburg, 26, 27, 28, 29, 30 April 1943, pp. 22-29; Cape Town, 10, 11, 12, 13, 14 April 1944, pp. 34-41; East London, 3, 4, 5, 6 April 1945, pp. 28-30, 32-35; Durban, 22, 23, 24, 25, 26 April 1946, pp. 24, 32-35; Port Elizabeth, 7, 8, 9, 10, 11 April 1947, pp. 31-35, op.cit.



A resolution which provided for the modification of the block vote in elections was finally carried at the annual conference of the T. & L.C. in early 1948. A number of the trade unions from the 'centre-right' bloc such as the A.E.U. and the South African Cinematograph Operators' Union supported the resolution which was carried on a block vote by 91 346 votes to 78 999.<sup>1</sup> The A.E.U., which was affiliated to the T. & L.C. on a membership of 11 232, was bitterly reproached for having "let down the right" and for "stabbing in the back".<sup>2</sup>

In terms of the resolution the T. & L.C.'s affiliates were to be divided into a number of "industrial groups" such as mining and engineering and each group was to elect a specified number of n.e.c. members by means of a block vote.<sup>3</sup> The 1948 n.e.c. was elected by means of the group system and the new n.e.c. was dominated by trade unionists who can be classified as centrists. The communists and other radicals comprised a significant minority of the new n.e.c.'s members. 'Right-wing' trade unionists such as G. McCormick (the general secretary of the South African Engine Drivers' and Firemen's Association) viewed the composition of the n.e.c. with considerable concern and numerous statements

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1. Ibid., Cape Town, 24, 25, 29, 30, 31 March, 1, 2 April 1948, pp. 31-35. It must be noted that the Pretoria-based trade unions which withdrew from the T. & L.C. in 1947 accounted for a total affiliated membership of just under three thousand. For the withdrawal of the trade unions see pp. 217-220 below.
  2. Minutes of the Annual Conference of the T. & L.C., Cape Town, 24, 25, 29, 30, 31 March, 1, 2 April 1948, p. 12; A.E.U.M.R., June 1948 (Quotes in text).
  3. Minutes of the Annual Conference of the T. & L.C., Cape Town, 24, 25, 29, 30, 31 March, 1, 2 April 1948, pp. 31, 44-48, op.cit.

were made that the "communists" had taken over control of the T. & L.C.<sup>1</sup> Thus serious tensions existed in the T. & L.C. prior to the N.P.'s victory in the mid-1948 general election.

There is no evidence of an ethnic struggle between Afrikaner and English-speaking trade unionists at the T. & L.C. conferences. Nevertheless, it can be noted that English-speaking trade unionists retained their dominant position in the T. & L.C. during the 1940's. However, with the exception of the early 1940's, the English-speaking trade unionists' dominance in the T. & L.C. during the decade was far less secure than during the 1930's. Thus, for example, during the second half of the 1940's English-speaking trade unionists regularly comprised approximately half of the delegates at the T. & L.C. conferences, Afrikaners approximately 30 per cent of the delegates, non-whites approximately 15 per cent and Jews approximately five per cent.<sup>2</sup>

English-speaking trade unionists regularly comprised a majority of the T. & L.C.n.e.c. members during the 1940's. Afrikaners regularly comprised approximately 20 per cent

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1. Ibid.: Port Elizabeth, 7, 8, 9, 10, 11 April 1947, pp. 39, 47; Cape Town, 24, 25, 29, 30, 31 March, 1, 2 April 1948, pp. 61-63, 93; A.E.U.M.R., June 1948.
  2. Minutes of the Annual Conference of the T. & L.C.: Cape Town, 10, 11, 12, 13, 14 April 1944, pp. 14-16; East London, 3, 4, 5, 6 April 1945, pp. 9-12; Durban, 22, 23, 24, 25, 26 April 1946, pp. 5-7; Port Elizabeth, 7, 8, 9, 10, 11 April 1947, pp. 5-8; Cape Town, 24, 25, 29, 30, 31 March, 1, 2 April 1948, pp. 11-17, op.cit.; Minutes of the Inaugural Conference of the T. & L.C., East London, 26, 27, 28, 29 April 1949, pp. 3-6, op.cit.

of the n.e.c. members during the first half of the 1940's and regularly comprised approximately 30 per cent of the n.e.c. members during the second half of the decade. Between two and four Jews usually served on the twenty-four man n.e.c. during the decade.<sup>1</sup> It will be recalled that with the exception of the 1930/1931 n.e.c. no non-white was ever elected to the executive.<sup>2</sup>

C. Political Policy and Relations with the  
Wartime and United Party Governments

The annual conference of the T. & L.C. in early 1940 endorsed South Africa's participation in the war by thirty votes to twenty-three. Although the Afrikaner delegates appear to have generally voted against South Africa's participation in the war, they did not constitute a crucial bloc at the conference. Very roughly, the conference was attended by forty English-speaking delegates, twelve Afrikaners, eight Jews, four Colour-eds/Indians and two blacks.<sup>3</sup> Opposition to the T. & L.C.'s

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1. Minutes of the Annual Conference of the T. & L.C.: Cape Town, 25, 26, 27, 28, 29 March 1940, pp. 91, 100; Durban, 14, 15, 16, 17, 18 April 1941, pp. 68-69, 73; Port Elizabeth, 6, 7, 8, 9, 10 April 1942, pp. 25-26; Johannesburg, 26, 27, 28, 29, 30 April 1943, pp. 48, 61, 66; Cape Town, 10, 11, 12, 13, 14 April 1944, pp. 43-44, 56; East London, 3, 4, 5, 6 April 1945, pp. 35, 43; Durban, 22, 23, 24, 25, 26 April 1946, pp. 35, 43; Port Elizabeth, 7, 8, 9, 10, 11 April 1947, pp. 39, 47; Cape Town, 24, 25, 29, 30, 31 March, 1, 2 April 1948, pp. 61-63, op.cit.; Minutes of the Inaugural Conference of the T. & L.C., East London, 26, 27, 28, 29 April 1949, pp. 26-27, 30, op.cit.; T. & L.C. Annual Report and Balance Sheet for 1942, p. 23, op.cit.
  2. See p. 166 above.
  3. It is thus clear that a significant number of delegates either abstained or (deliberately or otherwise) were not present when the motion was put to the vote. For footnote and text see Minutes of the Annual Conference of the T. & L.C., Cape Town, 25, 26, 27, 28, 29 March 1940, pp. 1-3, 66-88, op.cit. For further information on the war vote see pp. 85-86, 97 above.

pro-war policy virtually disappeared after Hitler's invasion of the Benelux countries in 1940 and the Soviet Union in 1941.<sup>1</sup>

The annual conferences of the T. & L.C. consistently elected pro-war national executive committees to office. Very few communists and other radicals served on the T. & L.C.n.e.c. during the war years.<sup>2</sup>

The T. & L.C.n.e.c. either acquiesced in or merely forwarded mild protests to the government against the introduction of the various wartime regulations which severely curtailed the rights of the workers.<sup>3</sup> Thus, for example, the T. & L.C.n.e.c. failed to protest to the government against the promulgation of War Measure 9 of 1942 which empowered the Minister of Labour to impose compulsory arbitration on the two parties to an industrial dispute

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1. Minutes of the Annual Conference of the T. & L.C., Port Elizabeth, 6, 7, 8, 9, 10 April 1942, pp. 7-8, 36, 38-39, op.cit.

For examples of trade unions which reversed their war policy see pp. 97, 116-117 above.

2. Minutes of the Annual Conference of the T. & L.C.: Cape Town, 25, 26, 27, 28, 29 March 1940, pp. 91, 100; Durban, 14, 15, 16, 17, 18 April 1941, pp. 68-69, 73; Port Elizabeth, 6, 7, 8, 9, 10 April 1942, pp. 25-26; Johannesburg, 26, 27, 28, 29, 30 April 1943, pp. 48, 61; Cape Town, 10, 11, 12, 13, 14 April 1944, pp. 43-44, 56; East London, 3, 4, 5, 6 April 1945, pp. 35, 43, op.cit.; T. & L.C. Annual Report and Balance Sheet for 1942, op.cit., p. 23.

3. Minutes of T. & L.C.N.E.C. Meeting, 16 April 1940, 23 April 1940, 4 June 1940, 9 July 1940, 16 July 1940, 30 July 1940, 6 August 1940, 8 October 1940, 15 October 1940, 29 October 1940, 4 February 1941, 20 May 1941, 3 November 1942, op.cit.; T. & L.C. Annual Report and Balance Sheet for 1942, p. 19, op.cit.

if in his opinion "that dispute may affect adversely the effective prosecution of the war".<sup>1</sup> Furthermore, although a N.U.D.W. resolution condemning War Measure 9 was carried on a show of hands at the annual conference of the T. & L.C. in early 1943, the Council's n.e.c. declined to forward the resolution to the government.<sup>2</sup> A resolution condemning War Measure 9 was defeated on a block vote at the annual conference of the T. & L.C. in early 1944.<sup>3</sup>

The T. & L.C. was absorbed to a limited extent into the wartime administration. Thus, for example, the T. & L.C. held many meetings with the premier, General J. Smuts;<sup>4</sup> T. & L.C. nominees were appointed to numerous boards and committees such as the Union Tender and Supplies Board and the various demobilisation boards and committees;<sup>5</sup> and the Labour Department generally consulted the T. & L.C. when it drafted the various social-welfare and industrial

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1. Minutes of T. & L.C.N.E.C. Meeting, 24 February 1942, op.cit.; R.H. Davies, Capital, State and White Labour in S.A. 1900-1960, op.cit., p. 294 (Quote in text). It must be noted that black workers were completely prohibited from striking in terms of another war measure. R.H. Davies, Capital, State and White Labour in S.A. 1900-1960, op.cit., p. 294.
  2. Minutes of the Annual Conference of the T. & L.C., Johannesburg, 26, 27, 28, 29, 30 April 1943, pp. 53-54, 84-85, op.cit.; Minutes of T. & L.C.N.E.C. Meeting, 21 December 1943, op.cit. The relevant T. & L.C. conference resolutions were always forwarded to the government.
  3. Minutes of the Annual Conference of the T. & L.C., Cape Town, 10, 11, 12, 13, 14 April 1944, pp. 55-56, op.cit.
  4. Minutes of T. & L.C.N.E.C. Meeting, 10 October 1939, 14 November 1939, 29 July 1941, 29 September 1942, 7 March 1944, 16 May 1944, 27 June 1944, op.cit.
  5. Ibid., 31 October 1939, 2 January 1940, 16 January 1940, 5 March 1940, 18 June 1940, 25 June 1940, 20 November 1940, 28 April 1942, 11 August 1942; T. & L.C. Annual Report and Balance Sheet: 1944, p. 9; 1945, pp. 10-13, op.cit.

bills such as the bill to amend the Unemployment Benefit Act.<sup>1</sup>

However, only a few minor suggestions by the T. & L.C. were incorporated into the various industrial and social-welfare bills;<sup>2</sup> and the T. & L.C. consistently complained that the Council had been only granted token representation on the various boards and/or that the boards were merely advisory in character.<sup>3</sup> In addition, the government failed to consult the T. & L.C. when it introduced regulations such as War Measure 9 which severely curtailed the rights of the workers.<sup>4</sup>

The T. & L.C. enjoyed a sound relationship with the post-war U.P. government and a significant number of T. & L.C. nominees served on various government boards and committees.<sup>5</sup> However, the U.P. government's industrial and social-welfare

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1. Minutes of T. & L.C.N.E.C. Meeting, 30 January 1940, 3 December 1940, 4 February 1941, 18 March 1941, 1 April 1941, 6 May 1941, 27 January 1942, 12 December 1944, op.cit.
  2. Ibid., 3 December 1940, 4 February 1941, 11 March 1941, 18 March 1941, 1 April 1941, 6 May 1941.
  3. Ibid., 12 May 1942, 26 January 1943, 8 February 1944, 7 March 1944, 19 September 1944, 17 October 1944.
  4. Ibid., 1939-1945, and especially the n.e.c. meeting on 24 February 1942; T. & L.C. Annual Report and Balance Sheet for 1942, p. 11, op.cit.
  5. T. & L.C. Annual Report and Balance Sheet: 1946, pp. 12-13; 1947, pp. 7-8, op.cit.

legislation was prepared without any consultation with the T. & L.C.<sup>1</sup>; and the number of meetings between the Council and the government steadily decreased during the second half of the 1940's.<sup>2</sup>

The L.P. launched a campaign at the beginning of 1942 to bring about co-operation between the Party and the trade union movement.<sup>3</sup> A Concession Stores and Allied Trades Assistants' Union resolution which called for the T. & L.C. to "collaborate" with the L.P. was carried on a show of hands at the annual conference of the Council in April 1942. The fact that the L.P. was a member of the pro-war coalition government clearly influenced a number of the delegates to support the resolution.<sup>4</sup>

The T. & L.C.n.e.c. was deeply divided over the degree of the Council's collaboration with the L.P. The T. & L.C.n.e.c. finally resolved by a small majority to collaborate with the L.P. over a broad area and a National Labour Collaboration Committee, which consisted of members of the T. & L.C.n.e.c.

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1. Minutes of T. & L.C.N.E.C. Meeting, 14 May 1946, 13 May 1947, 27 May 1947, op.cit.; Minutes of the Annual Conference of the T. & L.C., Durban, 22, 23, 24, 25, 26 April 1946, p. 38, op.cit.
  2. Minutes of T. & L.C.N.E.C. Meeting, 31 July 1945, 11 September 1945, 5 February 1946, 27 May 1947, 26 August 1947, 2 December 1947, 17 February 1948, op.cit.; T. & L.C. Annual Report and Balance Sheet: 1946, pp. 11-12; 1947, p. 7, op.cit.
  3. C.L. Henderson, General Secretary, L.P. to E.S. Sachs, General Secretary, G.W.U., 5 March 1942. G.W.U. Archives, EBA 3-5; Minutes of L.P.N.E.C. Meeting, 19 February 1942. Minutebooks, etc., no. 7. L.P. Archives.
  4. Minutes of the Annual Conference of the T. & L.C., Port Elizabeth, 6, 7, 8, 9, 10 April 1942, pp. 21-24, op.cit.

and the L.P.n.e.c., was duly established.<sup>1</sup> However, although the Committee remained in existence until after the defeat of the Axis powers in 1945, it engaged in very little activity. The Committee drafted a few memoranda for submission to the government; and discussed, inter alia, the Afrikaner nationalists' assault on the trade union movement.<sup>2</sup>

D. Some Policy Considerations  
and General Activities

We have noted that a number of black trade unions were affiliated to the T. & L.C. during the 1940's.<sup>3</sup> However, the mining workers' trade unions were bitterly opposed to the T. & L.C. accepting the African Mine Workers' Union as an affiliate and the Council's n.e.c. rejected a few applications by the black trade union for affiliation during the first half of the 1940's.<sup>4</sup> It must be noted that the T. & L.C.n.e.c.

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1. Minutes of T. & L.C.N.E.C. Meeting, 16 June 1942, 14 July 1942, 11 August 1942, op.cit.; Minutes of T. & L.C. Special N.E.C. Meeting, 21 July 1942, op.cit.; T. & L.C. Annual Report and Balance Sheet for 1942, p. 18, op.cit.
  2. Minutes of T. & L.C.N.E.C. Meeting, 3 July 1945, 25 September 1945, op.cit.; Minutes of L.P.N.E.C. Meeting, 29 June 1944. Minutebooks, etc., no. 27. L.P. Archives.
  3. See p. 181 above.
  4. B.B. Broderick, General Secretary, M.W.U. to Secretary, T. & L.C., 23 October 1942, 13 July 1943. T.U.C.S.A. Archives, DC 18; A.A. Moore, General Secretary, S.A.R.W.A. to Secretary, T. & L.C., 12 July 1943. T.U.C.S.A. Archives, DC 18; R. Tennent, General Secretary, S.A. Engine Drivers' and Firemen's Association to Secretary, T. & L.C., 27 July 1943. T.U.C.S.A. Archives, DC 18; Minutes of T. & L.C.N.E.C. Meeting, 13 July 1943, 27 July 1943, 9 January 1945, op.cit.



declined to accept the African Mine Workers' Union as an affiliate even after a resolution which instructed the new T. & L.C.n.e.c. to reverse the policy of its predecessor and to accept the black trade union as an affiliate had been carried on a show of hands at the annual conference of the Council in early 1944.<sup>1</sup>

A number of the large trade unions from the 'centre-right' bloc such as the A.E.U. and the S.A.S.B.O. supported the admission of black trade unions to the Council. Consequently, resolutions at the 1947 and 1948 T. & L.C. conferences which called for black trade unions to be excluded from the Council were heavily defeated notwithstanding the fact that they were decided by means of a block vote.<sup>2</sup> However, the 1948 conference also resolved to refer the question of the admission of black trade unions to the T. & L.C. to a plebiscite of the affiliates' members.<sup>3</sup> (It must be noted that Davies and O'Meara incorrectly state that the resolution to exclude black trade unions from the T. & L.C. was **NARROWLY** defeated at the 1947 conference).<sup>4</sup>

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1. Minutes of the Annual Conference of the T. & L.C., Cape Town, 10, 11, 12, 13, 14 April 1944, p. 65, op.cit.; Minutes of T. & L.C.N. E.C. Meeting, 9 January 1945, op.cit.; T. & L.C. Annual Report and Balance Sheet: 1944, pp. 3-4; 1945, pp. 2-4, op.cit.
  2. Minutes of the Annual Conference of the T. & L.C.: Port Elizabeth, 7, 8, 9, 10, 11 April 1947, pp. 30-31; Cape Town, 24, 25, 29, 30, 31 March, 1, 2 April 1948, pp. 93-94, op.cit.
  3. Minutes of the Annual Conference of the T. & L.C., Cape Town, 24, 25, 29, 30, 31 March, 1, 2 April 1948, pp. 94-95, op.cit.  
For further information on the plebiscite see p. 231 below.
  4. R.H. Davies, Capital, State and White Labour in S.A. 1900-1960, op.cit., p. 315. D. O'Meara, "Class, Capital and Ideology in the Development of Afrikaner Nationalism", op.cit., p. 310.

The annual conferences of the T. & L.C. during the 1940's continued to call for blacks to be incorporated into the Industrial Conciliation Act's machinery<sup>1</sup>; and the 1947 conference condemned "the brutal methods used by the S.A. Police" to break the large-scale black miners' strike on the Witwatersrand in 1946.<sup>2</sup>

The T. & L.C. continued during the 1940's to lobby the government to introduce improved social-welfare and industrial legislation such as a compulsory pension scheme for all industrial workers<sup>3</sup>; to provide various forms of assistance to its affiliates<sup>4</sup>; and to submit memoranda to and/or give evidence before numerous parliamentary select committees and government commissions.<sup>5</sup> The annual conferences of the T. & L.C. during the second half of the 1940's urged the U.P. government to come to grips with the

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1. Minutes of the Annual Conference of the T. & L.C.: Cape Town, 25, 26, 27, 28, 29 March 1940, pp. 61-66; Port Elizabeth, 6, 7, 8, 9, 10 April 1942, p. 23; Johannesburg, 26, 27, 28, 29, 30 April 1943, p. 57; Port Elizabeth, 7, 8, 9, 10, 11 April 1947, p. 57; Cape Town, 24, 25, 29, 30, 31 March, 1, 2 April 1948, pp. 102-105, op.cit.
  2. Ibid., Port Elizabeth, 7, 8, 9, 10, 11 April 1947, pp. 51-54, 51 (Quote in text).
  3. Ibid., 1940-1949.
  4. Minutes of T. & L.C.N.E.C. Meeting, 14 May 1940, 24 September 1940, 2 December 1941, 16 November 1943, 30 November 1943, 15 August 1944, 9 January 1945, 12 August 1947, 26 August 1947, op.cit.; T. & L.C. Annual Report and Balance Sheet: 1941, pp. 20-21; 1943, pp. 15-16; 1945, pp. 7-8, op.cit.
  5. Minutes of T. & L.C.N.E.C. Meeting, 6 February 1940, 5 March 1940, 12 March 1940, 3 October 1944, 23 September 1947, op.cit.; T. & L.C. Annual Report and Balance Sheet for 1945, p. 20, op.cit.; Minutes of the Annual Conference of the T. & L.C., Cape Town, 10, 11, 12, 13, 14 April 1944, p. 43, op.cit.

rising cost of living and the continuous food shortages by, inter alia, introducing a food rationing scheme.<sup>1</sup>

General J. Smuts requested the T. & L.C. in late 1942/beginning 1943 to submit a Workers' Charter to the government.<sup>2</sup> A Charter was adopted at a specially convened conference of the T. & L.C.'s affiliates in November 1944 (sic) and a leather bound copy of the Charter was duly presented to Smuts.<sup>3</sup>

With one or two minor exceptions the Workers' Charter did not discriminate between white and non-white workers. The Charter stressed the importance of civil liberties but was silent on the question of the franchise. Thus, for example, the Charter stressed "the rights of all people to freedom of association, freedom of speech, assembly and worship" and called for "the right of all workers to organise into trade unions and to full recognition".

The Charter called upon the government to introduce improved social-welfare and industrial legislation. In addition, the Charter called for the establishment of a "state bank" and for the limitation of profits; and proposed in a vague and ambiguous manner that industrial and agricultural production be subject to considerable state direction and guidance.<sup>4</sup>

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1. Minutes of the Annual Conference of the T. & L.C.: Durban, 22, 23, 24, 25, 26 April 1946, pp. 40-41; Port Elizabeth, 7, 8, 9, 10, 11 April 1947, pp. 41-43; Cape Town, 24, 25, 29, 30, 31 March, 1, 2 April 1948, pp. 80-85, op.cit.
  2. T. & L.C. Annual Report and Balance Sheet for 1942, p. 11, op.cit.
  3. Minutes of the Workers' Charter Conference, Johannesburg, 20, 21 November 1944. T.U.C.S.A. Archives, DD 3-16; Minutes of T. & L.C. N.E.C. Meeting, 12 December 1944, op.cit.
  4. Minutes of the Workers' Charter Conference, Johannesburg, 20, 21 November 1944, op.cit.; T. & L.C.N.E.C. Draft Copy of the Workers' Charter, dated February 1944, pp. 1-20, 2 (Quotes in text). T.U.C.S.A. Archives, DD 4-9.

E.                    The Transvaal Local Committees  
                               of the Council

1.                    Introduction

In terms of the T. & L.C.'s constitution the by-laws of the local committees "shall not be inconsistent with the constitution of the Council";<sup>1</sup> and the local committees were "to function in accordance with the objects of the Council."<sup>2</sup>

The local committees were under the "direct control" of the T. & L.C.n.e.c.; and the n.e.c. was granted the authority to dissolve any local committee which failed "to carry out its functions in terms of this constitution."<sup>3</sup>

The local committees of the T. & L.C. accepted both regional trade unions and the local district committees/branches of national and provincial trade unions as affiliates. While the regional affiliates of the local committees had to be affiliated to the T. & L.C., the branches and district committees had to be affiliated to the Council through their union head offices.<sup>4</sup> Thus, for example, the I.M.S. would have to be affiliated to the T. & L.C. before the Society's Pretoria branch could formally be accepted as an affiliate of the Pretoria local committee.

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1. T. & L.C. Constitution, as Amended by the Annual Conference of the T. & L.C. in April 1942, sec. 11 (i), op.cit.

2. Ibid., sec. 11 (B).

3. Ibid., sec. 11 (A).

4. Ibid., secs. 11 (C), 11 (E), 11 (J).

A significant number of the T. & L.C.'s affiliates declined to affiliate to the local committees over the years and in 1946 the Council's constitution was amended to make affiliation to the local committees compulsory. In terms of a constitutional amendment which was adopted at the annual conference of the T. & L.C. in early 1946 the affiliation dues of the local committees were incorporated into the compulsory affiliation levy of the Council.<sup>1</sup>

It will be remembered that a number of local committees were successfully established outside the Transvaal over the years.<sup>2</sup> The T. & L.C.'s headquarters at Johannesburg provided the Transvaal affiliates with various forms of assistance and there seemed little need for the existence of local committees in the province. Consequently, the two Transvaal local committees, which were established at Pretoria and on the Witwatersrand at the beginning of the 1930's, became defunct within a year or two.<sup>3</sup>

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1. Ibid., as Amended by the Annual Conference of the T. & L.C. in April 1946, secs. 12 (3), 12 (4), 8 (1) B; Minutes of the Annual Conference of the T. & L.C., Durban, 22, 23, 24, 25, 26 April 1946, pp. 25, 32, op.cit.
  2. See pp. 158-159 above.
  3. Minutes of T. & L.C. Witwatersrand Trades and Labour Committee Meeting, 1931-1932. T.U.C.S.A. Archives, DA 4; T. & L.C. Annual Report and Balance Sheet: for the Period 1 November 1930 to 31 December 1931, p. 4; 1933, p. 1; 1934, p. 2; 1935, p. 2, op.cit.; Minutes of T. & L.C.N.E.C. Meeting, 9 August 1932, 18 October 1932, op.cit.; Minutes of I.M.S. Pretoria B.E.C. Meeting, 28 August 1931, 9 October 1931, 29 November 1931, 2 March 1933. I.M.S. Archives.

The prospect of the local committees playing a role in the wartime administration probably influenced the decisions to revive the Witwatersrand and Pretoria local committees at the beginning of the 1940's. In addition, it will be recalled that the constitutional amendment which provided for the introduction of the block vote in elections was carried at the annual conference of the T. & L.C. in early 1940.<sup>1</sup> The communist/radical group was eliminated as a significant minority on the T. & L.C.n.e.c. at the 1940 conference and it was only in the post-war years that the leftists were able to improve their representation on the n.e.c.<sup>2</sup> While I have no hard evidence it would appear that the left-wing trade unionists on the Witwatersrand viewed the establishment of a local committee as a means of establishing an alternative power base in the T. & L.C.

Trade unions such as the G.W.U. and the Sweet Workers' Union lobbied the T. & L.C.n.e.c. at the beginning of the 1940's for permission to establish a local committee on the Witwatersrand. However, while the T. & L.C.n.e.c. allowed the Pretoria trade unions to establish a local committee in mid-1940, it consistently rejected appeals for permission to establish

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1. See p. 182 above.

2. Minutes of the Annual Conference of the T. & L.C.: Cape Town, 25, 26, 27, 28, 29 March 1940, pp. 91, 100; Durban, 14, 15, 16, 17, 18 April 1941, pp. 68-69, 73; Port Elizabeth, 6, 7, 8, 9, 10 April 1942, pp. 25-26; Johannesburg, 26, 27, 28, 29, 30 April 1943, pp. 48, 61; Cape Town, 10, 11, 12, 13, 14 April 1944, pp. 43-44, 56; East London, 3, 4, 5, 6 April 1945, pp. 35, 43; Durban, 22, 23, 24, 25, 26 April 1946, pp. 35, 43; Port Elizabeth, 7, 8, 9, 10, 11 April 1947, pp. 39, 47; Cape Town, 24, 25, 29, 30, 31 March, 1, 2 April 1948, pp. 61-63, op.cit.; T. & L.C. Annual Report and Balance Sheet for 1942, p. 23, op.cit.

a local committee on the Witwatersrand.<sup>1</sup> A resolution which called for the establishment of a local committee on the Witwatersrand was carried on a show of hands at the annual conference of the T. & L.C. in early 1942.<sup>2</sup>

## 2. The Southern Transvaal Local Committee

Although the conference resolution had called for the establishment of a Witwatersrand local committee, a Johannesburg local committee was established in August 1942.<sup>3</sup> However, the T. & L.C.n.e.c. allowed the local committee steadily to extend its jurisdiction over the years and by 1947 the local committee enjoyed jurisdiction over the whole of the Southern Transvaal.<sup>4</sup>

Very few of the regional trade unions/branches/district committees which enrolled the miners and the craftsmen affiliated to the local committee during the first half of the 1940's. Although affiliation to the local committee became compulsory after mid-1946, only a few delegates from the mining workers' trade unions and the craft unions attended the local committee's conferences during the second half of the decade. Consequently, the local committee was dominated during the 1940's by regional

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1. Minutes of T. & L.C.N.E.C. Meeting, 3 June 1941, 9 September 1941, 27 January 1942, 24 March 1942, op.cit.
  2. Minutes of the Annual Conference of the T. & L.C., Port Elizabeth, 6, 7, 8, 9, 10 April 1942, pp. 10-11, op.cit.
  3. T. & L.C. Annual Report and Balance Sheet for 1942, p. 6, op.cit.
  4. Ibid.: 1946, pp. 15-16; 1947, p. 18.

trade unions/branches which enrolled the semi-skilled workers employed in the various manufacturing industries and the workers employed in the various 'service' sectors of the economy.<sup>1</sup>

Communists and other radicals dominated the local committee from its inception. However, J.J. Venter served as the chairman of the local committee throughout the 1940's. One or two non-whites were elected to the local committee's executive during the decade.<sup>2</sup>

The local committee provided various forms of assistance to its affiliates. For example, the committee lobbied the Labour Department to instruct the Wage Board to make wage recommendations for a number of industries; and assisted numerous affiliates in negotiating industrial agreements with their employers.<sup>3</sup>

The local committee resolved in April/May 1944 to employ a full-time organiser and L.C. Scheepers (of the Transvaal Leather and Allied Trades Industrial Union) was duly elected to the post. Scheepers, who remained in the post during the period under review, established a number of small trade unions and generally assisted the smaller affiliates in

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1. See the minutes of the annual meetings and executive committee meetings of the Johannesburg/Witwatersrand and Vereeniging/Southern Transvaal Local Committee, 1942-1948. T.U.C.S.A. Archives.
  2. Ibid. I am uncertain whether any blacks served on the executive.
  3. See the minutes of the annual meetings and executive committee meetings of the Johannesburg/Witwatersrand and Vereeniging/Southern Transvaal Local Committee, 1942-1948, op.cit.



organisational activities. Scheepers engaged in a campaign during 1947 to rally support for the incorporation of blacks into the Industrial Conciliation Act's machinery.<sup>1</sup>

The local committee failed to organise any campaigns to combat the growing threat of christian-national trade unionism.<sup>2</sup> It should be noted that the T. & L.C. conferences during the mid-1940's passed resolutions which instructed the Council's n.e.c. to appoint a full-time organiser whose duty would be to launch a campaign against christian-national trade unionism in general and the Western Cape-based B.W.F. in particular.<sup>3</sup> However, a number of appeals by the T. & L.C.n.e.c. to its affiliates for funds to finance the appointment of a full-time organiser met with a meagre response and an organiser was consequently never appointed.<sup>4</sup> The Western Cape local committee of the T. & L.C. engaged in a limited amount of activity against the B.W.F.<sup>5</sup>

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1. Ibid., 1944-1948.

2. Ibid., 1942-1948.

3. Minutes of the Annual Conference of the T. & L.C.: East London, 3, 4, 5, 6 April 1945, p. 51; Durban, 22, 23, 24, 25, 26 April 1946, pp. 50-51, op.cit. For information on the B.W.F. see pp. 69, 75 above.

4. Minutes of T. & L.C.N.E.C. Meeting, 19 June 1945, 12 November 1946, 4 February 1947, 17 June 1947, 1 July 1947, op.cit.; T. & L.C. Annual Report and Balance Sheet for 1946, p. 10, op.cit.

5. Minutes of T. & L.C.N.E.C. Meeting, 3 July 1945, op.cit.; Minutes of T. & L.C.W.P.L.C. Management Meeting, 14 July 1947, 18 September 1947. T.U.C.S.A. Archives; Minutes of T. & L.C.W.P.L.C. Adjourned Management Meeting, 12 April 1948, op.cit.; Minutes of the Annual Conference of the T. & L.C., Durban, 22, 23, 24, 25, 26 April 1946, p. 50, op.cit.

3. Afrikaner Nationalism and the  
Pretoria and District Trades  
and Labour Committee

Introduction

Many of the Pretoria-based trade unions and the local branches of national and provincial trade unions had their offices in the Pretoria Trades Hall. The building, which was jointly owned by a number of trade unions, was administered by the Pretoria Trades Hall Committee. The Committee performed many of the functions of a regional trade union federation after the Pretoria and District Trades and Labour Committee of the T. & L.C. (P. & D.T. & L.C.) had become defunct in the early 1930's. Thus, for example, the Pretoria Trades Hall Committee engaged in anti-fascist activities, organised a number of May Day celebrations, and attempted to arrange organisational assistance for the small Pretoria-based trade unions.<sup>1</sup> The P. & D.T. & L.C. was revived in mid-1940 and the Pretoria Trades Hall Committee duly abandoned its general trade union activity.

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1. S.A.T.J., May 1929, May 1931, April 1932, March 1935, May 1935, May 1936, March 1937, May 1938, May 1939; Minutes of I.M.S. Pretoria B.E.C. Meeting, 23 April 1935, 1 September 1936, 10 October 1938, 27 March 1939, op.cit.; Minutes of I.M.S. Pretoria Branch General Meeting, 4 August 1945, op.cit.  
The Johannesburg May Day celebrations were organised by an independent body, the United May Day Committee.

### Membership characteristics

While a few black trade unions were established in Pretoria over the years it is doubtful whether any exclusively Coloured/Indian trade union ever operated in the region. Most of the Pretoria-based trade unions and the local branches of national and provincial trade unions enrolled only whites as members. A handful of the Pretoria-based trade unions such as the National Baking Industrial Union and the Pretoria Liquor and Catering Trades Employees' Union enrolled whites and non-whites (i.e., Coloureds and Indians) as members.<sup>1</sup>

The Pretoria Liquor and Catering Trades Employees' Union, for example, enrolled its white and non-white members into separate sections of the Union. The white members dominated the Union and the non-white section was permitted only a few representatives on the Union's executive council.<sup>2</sup>

A significant number of the eligible regional trade unions/local branches/district committees failed to affiliate to the P. & D.T. & L.C. during the first half of the 1940's.<sup>3</sup> The Afrikaner nationalists dominated few, if any, of the P. & D.T. & L.C.'s affiliates at the dawn of the 1940's.<sup>4</sup> However, two

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1. Annexure D, in T. & L.C.N.E.C. Memorandum Submitted to the Industrial Legislation Commission by the T. & L.C., Johannesburg, December 1948, op.cit.; T. & L.C., List of Unions and Branches of Unions Affiliated to the T. & L.C. as at 31 March 1950. T.U.C.S.A. Archives, DD 2.
  2. E. Lawlor, Secretary, Witwatersrand Liquor and Catering Trade Employees' Union to Secretary, T. & L.C., 17 March 1942, op.cit.
  3. Minutes of P. & D.T. & L.C. Monthly Meeting, 1943-1946. T.U.C.S.A. Archives; T. & L.C., List of Unions and Branches of Unions Affiliated to the T. & L.C. as at 31 March 1950, op.cit.
  4. This statement is based on a general impression of the material examined in regard to the P. & D.T. & L.C. and the Committee's affiliates.

nebulous ideological blocs - a 'social democratic' bloc and an Afrikaner nationalist bloc - emerged in the P. & D.T. & L.C. as the 1940's progressed.

The members of the nebulous 'social democratic' bloc included the Pretoria-based South African Mint Employees' Union and the National Baking Industrial Union; and the Pretoria branches of the I.M.S., the N.U.D.W., the S.A.T.U. and the South African Hairdressers Employees' Industrial Union.<sup>1</sup>

The Pretoria branch of the I.M.S. was one of the most prominent members of the 'social democratic' bloc. The branch, which enrolled only whites as members, had 269 members in late 1951.<sup>2</sup> It would appear that the branch's membership consisted roughly of an equal number of Afrikaner and English-speaking members during the 1940's.<sup>3</sup>

The Pretoria branch of the I.M.S. during the 1930's and 1940's endorsed the Society's policy that non-white members who migrated to the Transvaal would be permitted to work in the province's foundries;<sup>4</sup> supported the incorporation of blacks into the Industrial Conciliation Act's machinery;<sup>5</sup>

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1. Minutes of P. & D.T. & L.C. Monthly Meeting, 1943-1947, op.cit.

2. Minutes of I.M.S.N.E.C. Meeting, 21 March 1953, op.cit.

3. Minutes of I.M.S. Pretoria B.E.C. Meeting, 1940-1950, op.cit.;  
Minutes of I.M.S. Pretoria Branch General Meeting, 1940-1950, op.cit.

4. Minutes of I.M.S. Pretoria Branch General Meeting, 18 July 1935, op.cit. For information on the I.M.S.'s policy on the issue see p. 45 above.

5. Minutes of I.M.S. Pretoria B.E.C. Meeting, 8 February 1943, 22 February 1943, op.cit.

actively supported a number of anti-fascist campaigns;<sup>1</sup> and vigorously opposed the Society's decision in late 1950 to disaffiliate from the T. & L.C.<sup>2</sup>

The trade unions which formed the Afrikaner nationalist bloc in the P. & D.T. & L.C. can be divided into three broad groups. Firstly, a number of the Pretoria branches of trade unions such as the A.S.W. and the B.W.I.U. fell under the control of Afrikaner nationalist sympathisers during the first half of the 1940's.<sup>3</sup> Secondly, a number of the Pretoria-based trade unions which leaned in favour of the Afrikaner nationalists affiliated to the P. & D.T. & L.C. during the war years. Thus, for example, the South African Iron, Steel and Kindred Trades Association and the Public Service and Provincial Council Workers' Union affiliated to both the T. & L.C. and the P. & D.T. & L.C. in 1944.<sup>4</sup>

Thirdly, one or two of the trade unions which the P. & D.T. & L.C. had established fell under the control of the Afrikaner nationalists during the mid-1940's. The Pretoria branches of the I.M.S. and the S.A.T.U. played prominent roles in the establishment of the Pretoria Match Workers'

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1. Ibid., 4 April 1935, 10 May 1935, 24 May 1935, 22 June 1936, 1 September 1936, 28 September 1936, 10 July 1944, 11 December 1944, 22 October 1945; Minutes of I.M.S. Pretoria Branch General Meeting, 29 March 1935, 21 November 1944, op.cit.
  2. Minutes of I.M.S. Pretoria B.E.C. Meeting, 30 October 1950, 27 November 1950, op.cit.; Minutes of the Biennial Conference of the I.M.S., Johannesburg, 10-14 December 1951, pp. 31-35. I.M.S. Archives.
  3. See p. 134 above.
  4. Minutes of T. & L.C.N.E.C. Meeting, 28 April 1942, 27 June 1944, 18 July 1944, op.cit.; Minutes of P. & D.T. & L.C. Monthly Meeting, 10 November 1944, 8 December 1944, op.cit. For information on the South African Iron, Steel and Kindred Trades Association see pp. 32, 78 above and 219-220, 322-324 below.

Union in late 1940/early 1941.<sup>1</sup> The new trade union, which had a membership of approximately ninety in mid-1941, duly affiliated to the T. & L.C. and the P. & D.T. & L.C.<sup>2</sup> By mid-1944 the trade union had fallen under the control of Afrikaner nationalist sympathisers.<sup>3</sup>

Finally, it should be noted that the African Cement Workers' Union was the only black trade union which was ever affiliated to the P. & D.T. & L.C. The P. & D.T. & L.C. accepted the African Cement Workers' Union as an affiliate in mid-1943 after the Union had undertaken to appoint whites to represent it at the local committee's monthly meetings.<sup>4</sup>

#### System of government

While each local committee was free to draft its own by-laws the T. & L.C.'s constitution stipulated that the by-laws "shall not be inconsistent with the constitution of the Council."<sup>5</sup> The P. & D.T. & L.C.'s structures comprised a monthly meeting of the local committee's affiliates and an executive committee.<sup>6</sup> The executive committee, which consisted exclusively of a number of lay office-bearers, was elected for a

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1. Minutes of the Annual Conference of the T. & L.C., Durban, 14, 15, 16, 17, 18 April 1941, p. 23, op.cit.; Minutes of I.M.S. Pretoria B.E.C. Meeting, 13 January 1941, op.cit.; S.A.T.J., February 1941.

2. Minutes of T. & L.C.N.E.C. Meeting, 29 July 1941, op.cit.

3. Minutes of P. & D.T. & L.C. Monthly Meeting, 26 May 1944, op.cit.

4. Ibid., 9 July 1943; Minutes of P. & D.T. & L.C. Special Meeting, 30 July 1943, op.cit. The admission of black trade unions to the P. & D.T. & L.C. is discussed in depth in the final section of the chapter. See pp. 217-220 below.

5. T. & L.C. Constitution, as Amended by the Annual Conference of the T. & L.C. in April 1942, sec. 11 (i), op.cit.

6. Constitution of the P. & D.T. & L.C., (1940), signed by T.C. Rutherford (Chairman) and L. Bezuidenhout (Secretary), rules 7, 9. T.U.C.S.A. Archives, DD 8.6.

one year term of office at a monthly meeting of the local committee's affiliates.<sup>1</sup> The office bearers met irregularly and the monthly meeting served in practice as both an executive and a decision making body.<sup>2</sup>

All the affiliates of the P. & D.T. & L.C. were required to pay a fixed affiliation subscription of four pounds per annum.<sup>3</sup> Each affiliate was entitled to be represented by two delegates at the monthly meeting.<sup>4</sup> The P. & D.T. & L.C.'s by-laws made no provision for a block vote and all the elections and resolutions at the monthly meetings were decided by means of a vote of the delegates (the by-laws are silent on the question and I am uncertain whether the voting was by means of a show of hands and/or by a ballot of the delegates).<sup>5</sup>

#### The leadership

Trade unionists from the 'social democratic' affiliates of the P. & D.T. & L.C. served in all the major office-bearer posts during the first half of the 1940's.<sup>6</sup> Thus, for example,

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1. Ibid., rule 7.

2. Minutes of P. & D.T. & L.C. Monthly Meeting, 1943-1947, op.cit.

3. Constitution of the P. & D.T. & L.C., (1940), signed by T.C. Rutherford (Chairman) and L. Bezuidenhout (Secretary), rule 5 (A), op.cit.

4. Ibid., rule 8.

5. Ibid., rule 11.

6. The P. & D.T. & L.C.'s minutes for the early 1940's are missing and I have been unable to compile a full list of the junior office bearers such as the trustees.

T.C. Rutherford (the English-speaking secretary of the S.A.T.U.'s Pretoria branch) served as the chairman of the P. & D.T. & L.C. between 1940 and early 1945;<sup>1</sup> and L.F. Bezuidenhout (the Afrikaner lay president of the I.M.S.'s Pretoria branch) served as the secretary-treasurer of the local committee between 1940 and early 1944.<sup>2</sup> The left-leaning R. Blake (the English-speaking national president of the N.U.D.W.) replaced L.F. Bezuidenhout as the secretary-treasurer in early 1944.<sup>3</sup>

The Afrikaner nationalist bloc achieved its first important victory in the February 1945 executive committee election. The Afrikaner nationalists won three of the seven office

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1. Minutes of P. & D.T. & L.C. Monthly Meeting, 9 July 1943, 18 February 1944, op.cit.; Constitution of the P. & D.T. & L.C., (1940), signed by T.C. Rutherford (Chairman) and L. Bezuidenhout (Secretary), op.cit.; S.A.T.J., February 1941. T.C. Rutherford served as the secretary of the Pretoria branch of the S.A.T.U. for much of the 1940's. He was elected as the secretary-organiser of the S.A.T.U. in early 1948. S.A.T.J., May 1942, February 1948.
  2. Minutes of P. & D.T. & L.C. Monthly Meeting, 9 July 1943, op.cit.; Minutes of I.M.S. Pretoria Branch General Meeting, 11 October 1940, op.cit. L.F. Bezuidenhout served as the president of the Pretoria branch of the I.M.S. between 1940 and 1946. He was elected to the new post of national organiser of the I.M.S. in 1946 and remained in the post until his death in late 1948. Minutes of I.M.S. Pretoria Branch General Meeting, 12 July 1940, 17 August 1942, 15 July 1943, 20 July 1944, 21 August 1946, op.cit.; Minutes of T. & L.C.N.E.C. Meeting, 9 November 1948, op.cit.
  3. Minutes of P. & D.T. & L.C. Monthly Meeting, 18 February 1944, op.cit. R. Blake was the nephew of W. Blake, the general secretary of the B.W.I.U. R. Blake served as the national president of the N.U.D.W. between 1944 and 1953. He was also closely associated with a number of Pretoria-based trade unions such as the National Baking Industrial Union. N. Herd, op.cit., pp. 84-85; R. Blake, General Secretary, National Baking Industrial Union to Secretary, T. & L.C., 31 January 1947. T.U.C.S.A. Archives, DA 7-1; Minutes of the Annual Conference of the N.U.D.W., 1944-1953, op.cit.



bearer posts and returned M.J. Palm (the Pretoria organiser of the B.W.I.U.) as the chairman of the P. & D.T. & L.C.; M. Otto (of the Pretoria branch of the Amalgamated Bricklayers' Trade Union of South Africa) as the senior vice-chairman; and G.H. Beetge (who attended the P. & D.T. & L.C.'s monthly meetings as a delegate of the Pretoria Match Workers' Union) as one of the trustees. However, R. Blake secured re-election to his post of secretary-treasurer. The elections for the main office bearer posts were keenly contested and Palm, Otto and Blake all secured election to their posts by eleven votes to ten.<sup>1</sup>

The Afrikaner nationalists failed to consolidate their position in the February 1946 executive committee election and won three of the office bearer posts (i.e., the chairmanship, the senior vice-chairmanship and the junior vice-chairmanship). R. Blake was elected unopposed as the secretary-treasurer after G.H. Beetge had been declared ineligible to contest the election for the post - Beetge was a delegate of the Pretoria Match Workers' Union which was in arrears with its affiliation dues.<sup>2</sup> Afrikaner nationalists were elected unopposed to all the office bearer posts in the February 1947 executive committee election.<sup>3</sup>

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1. Minutes of P. & D.T. & L.C. Monthly Meeting, 26 May 1944, 9 February 1945, op.cit. For information on Beetge see pp. 132-133, 135-136, 138-140, 143-144 above and 219-220, 323 below.
  2. Minutes of P. & D.T. & L.C. Monthly Meeting, 8 February 1946, op.cit.
  3. Ibid., 14 February 1947.

### General activities

The P. & D.T. & L.C. engaged in various activities over the years. Thus, for example, the local committee unsuccessfully contested a ward in the 1944 Pretoria municipal election;<sup>1</sup> organised a number of May Day celebrations;<sup>2</sup> raised funds for white workers involved in industrial disputes;<sup>3</sup> lobbied the local municipalities to erect bus shelters outside factories;<sup>4</sup> and engaged in much organisational activity among white workers. For example, in 1942 the P. & D.T. & L.C. assisted in the organisation of the white female workers employed in the munition section of the Pretoria mint.<sup>5</sup>

### The Pretoria and District Trades and Labour Committee and the South African Mint Employees' Union

The Pretoria and Kimberley mints manufactured munitions during the war years and many white females were hired as semi-skilled machine operators, etc. In contrast to the Pretoria mint, the

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1. Ibid., 18 February 1944.
  2. See p. 216 below.
  3. Minutes of I.M.S. Pretoria Branch General Meeting, 13 December 1940, 3 October 1941, op.cit.; L. Bezuidenhout, Secretary, P. & D.T. & L.C. to All Affiliated Unions, 8 March 1943. T.U.C.S.A. Archives, DC 14.
  4. Minutes of P. & D.T. & L.C. Monthly Meeting, 13 April 1945, 11 May 1945, 10 August 1945, op.cit.
  5. Minutes of I.M.S. Pretoria B.E.C. Meeting, 18 May 1942, op.cit.; S.A.T.J., May 1942.

Kimberley mint also employed Coloured females as semi-skilled workers.<sup>1</sup>

The A.E.U. was faced with certain constitutional difficulties in enrolling females as members and in early 1942 the Union requested the T. & L.C.n.e.c. to establish a trade union for the female munition workers and donated one hundred pounds to cover the initial organising expenses.<sup>2</sup> The T. & L.C.n.e.c. duly established the South African Mint Employees' Union (S.A.M.E.U.) and hired Mrs. F.J. Engela (then the organiser of the Pretoria branch of the N.U.D.W.) as a temporary full-time organiser.<sup>3</sup> Engela enrolled the white and Coloured female munition workers at the two mints into the new trade union. By the close of 1942 the S.A.M.E.U. had approximately three thousand members and Engela had become the full-time organising-secretary of the Union.<sup>4</sup>

The military authorities provided the (white) female munition workers with transport to and from the Pretoria mint. While it is difficult to give an accurate account of the following events it would appear that a considerable number of the female munition workers objected to the military

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1. Minutes of T. & L.C.N.E.C. Meeting, 27 January 1942, 11 August 1942, op.cit.; Minutes of T. & L.C.N.E.C. Adjourned Meeting, 19 May 1942, op.cit.
  2. Minutes of T. & L.C.N.E.C. Meeting, 27 January 1942, 24 February 1942, 11 August 1942, op.cit.; T. & L.C. Annual Report and Balance Sheet for 1942, p. 6, op.cit.
  3. Minutes of T. & L.C.N.E.C. Meeting, 10 March 1942, op.cit.; B.R. Lyall, Assistant Secretary, Pretoria Branch, N.U.D.W. to Secretary, T. & L.C. (n.d.). T.U.C.S.A. Archives, DC 5-37.
  4. Minutes of T. & L.C.N.E.C. Meeting, 11 August 1942, op.cit.; Minutes of T. & L.C.N.E.C. Adjourned Meeting, 19 May 1942, op.cit.; T. & L.C. Annual Report and Balance Sheet for 1942, p. 6, op.cit.

vehicles being driven by BLACK soldiers and that the discontent surfaced in the form of a short-lived boycott of the troop carriers in early May 1944.<sup>1</sup>

However, the S.A.M.E.U. leadership declined to support the agitation for white drivers, and M.J. Palm (the Pretoria organiser of the B.W.I.U. and then the junior vice-chairman of the P. & D.T. & L.C.) and D. Mellema (the Pretoria organiser of the A.S.W.) took the opportunity to champion the call for white drivers and to agitate against the S.A.M.E.U. leadership.<sup>2</sup> The monthly meeting of the P. & D.T. & L.C. in mid-May 1944 discussed Palm's and Mellema's interference in the domestic affairs of the S.A. M.E.U. A heated debate occurred over the issue and a resolution was finally adopted which censured the two organisers for their conduct.<sup>3</sup>

F.J. Engela (the organising-secretary of the S.A.M.E.U. and a member of the T. & L.C.n.e.c.) urged the Council's n.e.c. at the close of May 1944 to launch a campaign "to fight the fascist [i.e., the Afrikaner nationalist] menace which is threatening the trade union movement".<sup>4</sup> A specially appointed T. & L.C.n.e.c. sub-committee duly considered the proposal and recommended to the n.e.c. in September 1944 that an organiser

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1. Minutes of T. & L.C.N.E.C. Meeting, 9 May 1944, op.cit.; Minutes of P. & D.T. & L.C. Monthly Meeting, 18 February 1944, 19 May 1944, op.cit.; Minutes of A.S.W.E.C. Meeting, 10 May 1944, op.cit.

2. Ibid.

3. Minutes of P. & D.T. & L.C. Monthly Meeting, 19 May 1944, op.cit.

4. Minutes of T. & L.C.N.E.C. Meeting, 30 May 1944, op.cit.

be appointed to assist the Council's affiliates and that a bilingual journal be published to propagate the Council's general policy.<sup>1</sup>

The T. & L.C. published a bilingual journal, the Ambag, between late 1944 and mid-1948. The journal had a small circulation and - for reasons which are obscure - infrequently discussed the Afrikaner nationalists' assault on the trade union movement.<sup>2</sup>

While the T. & L.C.n.e.c. failed to appoint an organiser it endorsed a P. & D.T. & L.C. scheme in October 1944 whereby a temporary full-time organiser would be employed in the Pretoria area. In terms of the scheme the T. & L.C.'s head office and the P. & D.T. & L.C. would each contribute half of the organiser's salary for a period of four months.<sup>3</sup> The P. & D.T. & L.C. hired L.F. Bezuidenhout (the lay president of the Pretoria branch of the I.M.S.) as the temporary organiser. Bezuidenhout focused his attention on propagating the principles and practical benefits of trade unionism among the Afrikaner workers. He also engaged in organisational activity on behalf of a few of the P. & D.T. & L.C.'s affiliates such as the Public Service and Provincial Council Workers' Union.<sup>4</sup>

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1. Ibid., 30 May 1944, 5 September 1944, 10 October 1944.

2. Ibid., 24 April 1945, 7 September 1948; T. & L.C. Annual Report and Balance Sheet for 1944, p. 17, op.cit.; Ambag, 1944-1948.

3. Minutes of T. & L.C.N.E.C. Meeting, 3 October 1944, op.cit.

4. T. & L.C. Annual Report and Balance Sheet for 1945, pp. 15, 22, op.cit. For further information on L.F. Bezuidenhout see pp. 208-209 above.

The S.A.M.E.U. was faced with a serious unemployment problem among its members in early 1945. The Union resolved to hold a public protest meeting in Pretoria on 29 March 1945 and invited all the local M.P.'s to attend the meeting. The T. & L.C.n.e.c. subsequently instructed the P. & D.T. & L.C.'s executive committee to assist the S.A.M.E.U. in organising the meeting.<sup>1</sup>

The public protest meeting was marred by an altercation between M.J. Palm, who chaired the meeting, and the S.A. M.E.U.'s officials. The M.P.'s had not been invited to address the meeting and the S.A.M.E.U.'s officials unsuccessfully protested against Palm's decision to allow two N.P. M.P.'s to address the rally. A resolution censuring Palm (who, it will be recalled, had been elected chairman of the P. & D.T. & L.C. in February 1945) for his conduct at the protest meeting was narrowly defeated by thirteen votes to eleven at the monthly meeting of the local committee in mid-April 1945.<sup>2</sup>

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1. Minutes of T. & L.C.N.E.C. Meeting, 20 March 1945, op.cit.; Minutes of P. & D.T. & L.C. Monthly Meeting, 13 April 1945, op.cit.
  2. Minutes of P. & D.T. & L.C. Monthly Meeting, 13 April 1945, op.cit.

### May Day in Pretoria

It will be remembered that the Pretoria Trades Hall Committee organised a number of May Day celebrations during the 1930's.<sup>1</sup> The P. & D.T. & L.C. regularly organised May Day celebrations during the first half of the 1940's. The P. & D.T. & L.C.'s May Day celebrations generally included a children's athletic meeting, a dance and a rally which was usually concluded with the singing of the Red Flag.<sup>2</sup>

The P. & D.T. & L.C. resolved in April 1944 that the annual May Day rally would be addressed by M.J. Palm in Afrikaans and by R. Plunkett (the left-leaning secretary of the Pretoria branch of the I.M.S.) in English. When the audience arrived at the 1944 May Day rally they found "anti-communist" leaflets on the chairs. While Plunkett gave a traditional May Day speech Palm delivered an "anti-communist" diatribe.<sup>3</sup>

It would appear that all the speakers at the P. & D.T. & L.C.'s 1945 May Day rally were Afrikaner nationalists. The May Day celebration included a children's athletic meeting and an evening of Afrikaner folk dances.<sup>4</sup> The Afrikaner nationalists also dominated the P. & D.T. & L.C.'s 1946 May Day celebration.<sup>5</sup>

1. See p. 203 above.

2. S.A.T.J., May 1941, May 1942, May 1943, May 1944.

3. Minutes of P. & D.T. & L.C. Monthly Meeting, 19 May 1944, op.cit.

4. Ibid., 27 April 1945, 11 May 1945, 10 August 1945; Minutes of I.M.S. Pretoria B.E.C. Meeting, 30 July 1945, 10 September 1945, op.cit.

5. Minutes of P. & D.T. & L.C. Monthly Meeting, 10 May 1946, 14 June 1946, op.cit.

Black affiliates and the  
dissolution of the Pretoria and  
District Trades and Labour Committee

The P. & D.T. & L.C. was deeply divided during the early 1940's over the question of accepting black trade unions as affiliates.<sup>1</sup> The P. & D.T. & L.C. resolved by sixteen votes to eleven at a specially convened meeting of the local committee's affiliates in July 1943 to accept the African Cement Workers' Union (A.C.W.U.) as an affiliate after the Union had undertaken to appoint whites to represent it at the local committee's monthly meetings.<sup>2</sup> The A.C.W.U., which would appear to have had a white general secretary (M. Muller), remained affiliated to the P. & D.T. & L.C. over the years.<sup>3</sup>

It would appear that no other black trade union applied to the P. & D.T. & L.C. for affiliation until mid-1946.<sup>4</sup> Two black trade unions from Pretoria (the A.C.W.U. and the Pretoria Non-European Municipal Workers' Union) were affiliated to the T. & L.C. in mid-1946.<sup>5</sup> It will be remembered that the T. & L.C.'s constitution contained no colour bar and that the constitution stipulated that a local committee's by-laws

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1. Minutes of the Annual Conference of the T. & L.C., Johannesburg, 26, 27, 28, 29, 30 April 1943, pp. 11, 17-19, op.cit.
  2. Minutes of P. & D.T. & L.C. Special Meeting, 30 July 1943, op.cit.
  3. Minutes of P. & D.T. & L.C. Monthly Meeting, 27 April 1945, 4 June 1946, op.cit.
  4. Ibid., 1943-1946.
  5. T. & L.C. Annual Report and Balance Sheet for 1946, pp. 2-4, op.cit.



"shall not be inconsistent with the constitution of the Council".<sup>1</sup> It will also be recalled that in terms of a constitutional amendment which was adopted at the annual conference of the T. & L.C. in early 1946 all the eligible regional trade unions/local branches/district committees were automatically affiliated to the P. & D.T. & L.C.<sup>2</sup> Consequently, it is by no means clear why the Pretoria Non-European Municipal Workers' Union applied to the P. & D.T. & L.C. for affiliation in mid-1946. The P. & D.T. & L.C.'s monthly meeting in June 1946 was opposed to the principle of accepting black trade unions as affiliates and resolved by ten votes to seven not to accept the Pretoria Non-European Municipal Workers' Union as an affiliate.<sup>3</sup> The P. & D.T. & L.C. decided in October 1946 to amend its by-laws in order to formally exclude all black, Coloured and Indian trade unions from the local committee.<sup>4</sup>

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1. See pp. 160, 197 above.

2. See p. 198 above.

3. Minutes of P. & D.T. & L.C. Monthly Meeting, 14 June 1946, op.cit.

4. Minutes of T. & L.C.N.E.C. Meeting, 29 October 1946, 19 November 1946, 10 December 1946, op.cit. The question naturally arises whether the P. & D.T. & L.C.'s decision to exclude non-white trade unions from the local committee was in the economic interest of its affiliates' members. The P. & D.T. & L.C. probably did not consider the Coloured and Indian workers as a serious threat to the economic position of its affiliates' members in view of the limited number of Coloureds and Indians resident in the area. The position in regard to black workers is more complex and further research is required into the character of the P. & D.T. & L.C.'s affiliates. However, it can be stated that the bulk of the S.A. Iron, Steel and Kindred Trades Association's members were employed at the Pretoria plant of the S.A. Iron and Steel Corporation (a state corporation). I have found no evidence of an attempt to employ semi-skilled black workers at the plant during the 1940's and it is possible that the Association's leadership considered that the U.P. government would not allow the white workers' position at the plant to be undermined.

The T. & L.C.n.e.c. informed the P. & D.T. & L.C. in mid-January 1947 that the local committee would be dissolved at the close of March 1947 unless the local committee agreed to accept non-white trade unions as affiliates.<sup>1</sup> The annual conference of the T. & L.C. was scheduled for early April 1947 and the P. & D.T. & L.C. decided to appeal to the conference to rescind the T. & L.C.n.e.c.'s ultimatum.<sup>2</sup> It will also be remembered that one of the affiliates of the P. & D.T. & L.C., the South African Iron, Steel and Kindred Trades Association, gave notice of its intention to move a resolution at the T. & L.C. conference which proposed that black trade unions be excluded from the Council.<sup>3</sup>

The delegates at the annual conference of the T. & L.C. in April 1947 included M.J. Palm (the chairman of the P. & D.T. & L.C. who attended the conference as a delegate of the B.W.I.U.), G.H. Beetge (who attended the conference as the delegate of the Pretoria Match Workers' Union) and J.C.C. Botha (the secretary-treasurer of the P. & D.T. & L.C. and the general secretary of both the Public Service and Provincial Council Workers' Union and the Pretoria Retail Meat Trade Employees' Union).<sup>4</sup> Although Palm raised the question

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1. Minutes of T. & L.C.N.E.C. Meeting, 21 January 1947, op.cit.

2. Minutes of P. & D.T. & L.C. Monthly Meeting, 14 February 1947, 14 March 1947, op.cit.

3. See pp. 142-143 above.

4. Minutes of the Annual Conference of the T. & L.C., Port Elizabeth, 7, 8, 9, 10, 11 April 1947, pp. 5-8, op.cit.; Minutes of P. & D.T. & L.C. Monthly Meeting, 14 February 1947, op.cit.; J.C.C. Botha, General Secretary, Pretoria Retail Meat Trade Employees' Union to Secretary, T. & L.C., 20 December 1946. T.U.C.S.A. Archives, DC 3; J.C.C. Botha, General Secretary, Public Service and Provincial Council Workers' Union to Secretary, T. & L.C., 18 December 1946. T.U.C.S.A. Archives, DC 3.

of the dissolution of the P. & D.T. & L.C. at the conference the issue was not put to a vote.<sup>1</sup> M.J. Palm and the delegates of five Pretoria-based trade unions withdrew from the conference after the defeat of the resolution which called for black trade unions to be excluded from the Council.<sup>2</sup>

The five Pretoria-based trade unions, which were affiliated to the T. & L.C. on a total membership of just under three thousand, duly disaffiliated from the Council and subsequently affiliated to the K.R.S.A.V. which was formally established shortly after the N.P.'s victory in the mid-1948 general election.<sup>3</sup> By early 1950 fourteen trade unions were affiliated to the K.R.S.A.V. on a total membership of 26 976. However, the M.W.U. was affiliated to the K.R.S.A.V. on a membership of seventeen thousand and the federation's affiliates consisted essentially of a number of small Pretoria-based trade unions.<sup>4</sup>

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1. Minutes of the Annual Conference of the T. & L.C., Port Elizabeth, 7, 8, 9, 10, 11 April 1947, p. 9, op.cit.
  2. The five trade unions which withdrew from the conference were the S.A. Iron, Steel and Kindred Trades Association, the Pretoria Match Workers' Union, the Public Service and Provincial Council Workers' Union, the Pretoria Retail Meat Trade Employees' Union and the Pretoria Liquor and Catering Trades Employees' Union. For footnote and text see Minutes of the Annual Conference of the T. & L.C., Port Elizabeth, 7, 8, 9, 10, 11 April 1947, p. 31, op.cit.; T. & L.C. Annual Report and Balance Sheet: 1942, p. 5; 1944, p. 4, op.cit.
  3. Minutes of T. & L.C.N.E.C. Meeting, 29 April 1947, 13 May 1947, 1 July 1947, 26 February 1948, op.cit.; T. & L.C. Annual Report and Balance Sheet for 1946, pp. 2-4, op.cit.; A.G. Forsyth, General Secretary, T. & L.C. to All Members of the N.E.C. and Secretaries of All Affiliated Unions, 22 March 1950. Cover 29-4. L.P. Archives; S.A.T.J., July 1948; Minutes of I.M.S. Pretoria B.E.C. Meeting, 14 June 1948, op.cit.
  4. A.G. Forsyth, General Secretary, T. & L.C. to All Members of the N.E.C. and Secretaries of All Affiliated Unions, 22 March 1950, op.cit. For further information on the K.R.S.A.V. see pp. 71-72 above.

## CHAPTER VIII

THE COLLAPSE OF THE SOUTH AFRICAN  
TRADES AND LABOUR COUNCIL : 1948-1954A. Membership Characteristics

The T. & L.C.'s membership dwindled rapidly during the first years of the N.P. government's rule and by mid-1951 a substantial number of the industrial unions, most of the craft unions and all of the mining workers' trade unions had disaffiliated from the Council.<sup>1</sup> The T. & L.C. experienced a slight but steady decline in its membership between mid-1951 and late 1954.<sup>2</sup> The T. & L.C. did not publish any membership lists during the last few years of its existence and I have used the attendance records of the annual conferences of the Council to illustrate the decline in the Council's membership. It will be noted from Table IV that the number of affiliates attending the annual conferences of the T. & L.C. decreased from eighty-eight in 1948 to forty-six in 1951 and to thirty-two in 1954.

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1. T. & L.C. Annual Report and Balance Sheet: 1947, pp. 4-6; 1949, pp. 37-41; 1950, pp. 27-31; 1951, annexure I, op.cit.; Minutes of T. & L.C.N.E.C. Meeting, 2 November 1950, 11 January 1951, op.cit.
  2. T. & L.C. Annual Report and Balance Sheet for 1951, annexure I, op.cit.; Minutes of the Annual Conference of the T. & L.C.: Durban, 21, 22, 23, 24 April 1952, annexure A; Port Elizabeth, 30, 31 March, 1, 2 April 1953, annexure I; Durban, 6, 7, 8 October 1954, annexure I, op.cit.

TABLE IV

ROUGH CLASSIFICATION OF THE AFFILIATES AT THE ANNUAL CONFERENCES OF THE SOUTH AFRICAN TRADES AND LABOUR COUNCIL, 1948, 1951 AND 1954.<sup>1</sup>

CATEGORY OF TRADE UNIONS	NUMBER OF TRADE UNIONS			AFFILIATED MEMBERSHIP			THE AFFILIATED MEMBERSHIP AS A PERCENTAGE OF THE T. & L.C.'s TOTAL AFFILIATED MEMBERSHIP		
	Mar./ Apr. 1948	July 1951	Oct. 1954	Mar./ Apr. 1948	July 1951	Oct. 1954	Mar./ Apr. 1948	July 1951	Oct. 1954
CRAFT UNIONS	12	3	2	54204	16254	16189	31,45	20,28	21,49
INDUSTRIAL UNIONS WHICH ENROLLED THE SEMI-SKILLED WORKERS IN THE VARIOUS MANUFACTU- RING INDUSTRIES	39	23	15	41689	35602	34918	24,19	44,41	46,34
INDUSTRIAL UNIONS WHICH ENROLLED THE WORKERS IN THE VARIOUS 'SERVICE' SECTORS OF THE ECONOMY (e.g., transport and the distribu- tive trade.)	34	20	15	50792	28307	24238	29,47	35,31	32,17
MINING WORKERS' TRADE UNIONS	3	0	0	25660			14,89		
TOTAL	88	46	32	172345	80163	75345			

1. The statistics are derived from the attendance lists at the annual conferences of the T. & L.C. See Minutes of the Annual Conference of the T. & L.C.: Cape Town, 24, 25, 29, 30, 31 March, 1, 2 April 1948, pp. 11-17; Cape Town, 16, 17, 18, 19 July 1951, annexure A; Durban, 6, 7, 8 October 1954, annexure I, op.cit.

The rapid decline in the T. & L.C.'s membership was reflected by the fact that only four large trade unions (i.e., the B.W.I.U., the G.W.U., the N.U.D.W. and the Motor Industry Employees' Union) remained affiliated to the Council in mid-1951.<sup>1</sup> The four trade unions, which jointly accounted for approximately half of the T. & L.C.'s affiliated membership, remained affiliated to the Council until its dissolution in late 1954.<sup>2</sup>

Finally, it should be noted that a considerable number of the trade unions which disaffiliated from the T. & L.C. after mid-1948 had a large proportion of Coloured and/or Indian members.<sup>3</sup> Approximately ten trade unions which either enrolled only whites as members or which had very few non-white members were affiliated to the T. & L.C. in 1954.<sup>4</sup>

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1. T. & L.C. Annual Report and Balance Sheet for 1951, annexure I, op.cit.; Minutes of the Annual Conference of the T. & L.C., Cape Town, 16, 17, 18, 19 July 1951, annexure A, op.cit.
  2. Minutes of the Annual Conference of the T. & L.C.: Durban, 21, 22, 23, 24 April 1952, annexure A; Port Elizabeth, 30, 31 March, 1, 2 April 1953, annexure I; Durban, 6, 7, 8 October 1954, annexure I, op.cit. For example, in late 1954 the B.W.I.U. was affiliated to the T. & L.C. on a membership of 6 685, the G.W.U. on 18 600, the N.U.D.W. on 11 025 and the Motor Industry Employees' Union on 9 504. Of the thirty-two affiliates which attended the annual conference of the T. & L.C. in late 1954 seventeen were affiliated on a membership of a thousand or less and ten were affiliated on a membership of between one and three thousand. Minutes of the Annual Conference of the T. & L.C., Durban, 6, 7, 8 October 1954, annexure I, op.cit.
  3. T. & L.C. Annual Report and Balance Sheet: 1947, pp. 4-6; 1949, pp. 37-41; 1950, pp. 27-31; 1951, annexure I, op.cit.; Minutes of the Annual Conference of the T. & L.C.: Durban, 21, 22, 23, 24 April 1952, annexure A; Port Elizabeth, 30, 31 March, 1, 2 April 1953, annexure I; Durban, 6, 7, 8 October 1954, annexure I, op.cit.
  4. Minutes of the Annual Conference of the T. & L.C., Durban, 6, 7, 8 October 1954, annexure I, op.cit.

B. System of Government

The T. & L.C.'s legal adviser informed the Council's n.e.c. in mid-1948 that the constitution which had been adopted at the inaugural 'all-in' conference in October 1930 was silent on the question of constitutional amendments and he added that it could not be assumed that the constitution could be amended by means of a majority vote. Consequently, the T. & L.C.'s constitution could not be amended without the consent of every affiliated trade union. All the constitutional amendments which had been adopted over the years were therefore invalid.<sup>1</sup>

Faced with these constitutional difficulties the annual conference of the T. & L.C. in early 1949 resolved to dissolve the Council and to establish a new trade union federation, the South African Trades and Labour Council (1949).<sup>2</sup> The inaugural conference of the new federation, which was held immediately after the annual conference of the T. & L.C., adopted a constitution which was almost a verbatim copy of the T. & L.C.'s constitution as amended over the years. However, the new federation's constitution provided that all elections were to be decided by means of a block vote.<sup>3</sup>

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1. Minutes of T. & L.C.N.E.C. Meeting, 6 July 1948, op.cit.; Minutes of T. & L.C.N.E.C. Special Meeting, 27 August 1948, 31 August 1948, op.cit. For information on the 'all-in' conference in 1930 see p. 158 above.
  2. Minutes of the Annual Conference of the T. & L.C., East London, 25 April 1949, pp. 17-19, op.cit.
  3. Minutes of the Inaugural Conference of the T. & L.C., East London, 26, 27, 28, 29 April 1949. T.U.C.S.A. Archives, DA 1-2; T. & L.C. Constitution and Standing Orders Adopted at the Inaugural Conference of the T. & L.C., East London, 26, 27, 28, 29 April 1949. T.U.C.S.A. Archives, DD 2.

C.            The Leadership and the Balance of  
                  Power in the Council

A few large 'centre-right' trade unions such as the M.W.U. disaffiliated from the T. & L.C. after the annual conference of the Council in early 1948.<sup>1</sup> However, all the large trade unions which remained affiliated to the T. & L.C. attended the inaugural conference of the new federation in early 1949.<sup>2</sup> The failure of the 'centre-right' bloc to gain control of the n.e.c. which was elected at the inaugural conference contributed to the decision of several large 'centre-right' trade unions such as the S.A.T.U., the South African Engine Drivers' and Firemen's Association and the South African Association of Municipal Employees to disaffiliate from the new federation - hereafter referred to as the T. & L.C. - during the second half of 1949.<sup>3</sup>

A large number of communists and other radicals were elected to the T. & L.C.n.e.c. during the early 1950's. However, the

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1. Minutes of T. & L.C.N.E.C. Meeting, 27 April 1948, op.cit.; Minutes of A.S.W.E.C. Meeting, 18 March 1949, op.cit.
  2. T. & L.C. Annual Report and Balance Sheet for 1947, pp. 4-6, op.cit.; Minutes of the Inaugural Conference of the T. & L.C., East London, 26, 27, 28, 29 April 1949, pp. 3-6, op.cit.
  3. S.A.T.J., April 1947, February 1948, May 1948, September 1949, October 1949; Minutes of the Inaugural Conference of the T. & L.C., East London, 26, 27, 28, 29 April 1949, p. 30, op.cit.; Minutes of T. & L.C.N.E.C. Special Meeting, 1 September 1949, 8 September 1949, op.cit.; T. & L.C. Annual Report and Balance Sheet for 1949, p. 12, op.cit.; Minutes of a Special Conference of the T. & L.C., Durban, 31 October, 1, 2 November 1949, p. 51. T.U.C.S.A. Archives, DA 1.2.



communists and radicals never comprised a majority on the T. & L.C.n.e.c. and a leftist was never elected to the presidency. J.J. Venter served as the president of the T. & L.C. for much of the first half of the 1950's.<sup>1</sup>

A large number of militant trade unionists were "listed" in terms of the Suppression of Communism Act of 1950 and forced to sever their links with the trade union movement. For example, nine out of the twenty-four members of the 1951 T. & L.C.n.e.c. had been "listed" in terms of the Act by the close of 1953.<sup>2</sup> The number of leftists on the T. & L.C.n.e.c. decreased as the 1950's progressed and the 1952 and 1953 national executive committees were considerably more conservative than their immediate predecessors.<sup>3</sup>

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1. Minutes of the Annual Conference of the T. & L.C.: Durban, 18, 19, 20, 21 April 1950, pp. 42, 59-60; Cape Town, 16, 17, 18, 19 July 1951, pp. 23, 31-32; Durban, 21, 22, 23, 24 April 1952, pp. 28-29, 52; Port Elizabeth, 30, 31 March, 1, 2 April 1953, pp. 25-26, 33, 48, op.cit.; Minutes of T. & L.C.N.E.C. Meeting, 5 October 1950, op.cit.
  2. The nine were E.S. Sachs (the general secretary of the G.W.U.), P. Huyser (the national organiser of the B.W.I.U.), I Wolfson (the general secretary of the Tailoring Workers' Industrial Union), E. Weinberg (the national secretary of the National Union of Commercial Travellers), S. Rosenblatt (the president of the National Baking Industrial Union), W. Kalk (the general secretary of the Transvaal Leather and Allied Trades Industrial Union), R.H. Fleet (of, inter alia, the S.A. Hairdressers Employees' Industrial Union), H. Le Roux (of the Sweet Workers' Union) and B. du Toit (of, inter alia, the Textile Workers' Industrial Union). For footnote and text see Minutes of the Annual Conference of the T. & L.C., Cape Town, 16, 17, 18, 19 July 1951, pp. 23, 31-32, op.cit.; T. & L.C. Annual Report and Balance Sheet: 1952, Records of Attendances annexure; 1953 and Extended to Include the Period January to September 1954, pp. 12-13, op.cit.; Minutes of T. & L.C.N.E.C. Meeting, 17 June 1952, 14 July 1953, op.cit.; Minutes of T. & L.C.N.E.C. Special Meeting, 9 September 1953, op.cit.; Minutes of T. & L.C.N.E.C. Adjourned Meeting, 13 October 1953, op.cit.
  3. Minutes of the Annual Conference of the T. & L.C.: Cape Town, 16, 17, 18, 19 July 1951, pp. 23, 31-32; Durban, 21, 22, 23, 24 April 1952, pp. 28-29, 52; Port Elizabeth, 30, 31 March, 1, 2 April 1953, pp. 25-26, 48, op.cit.

English-speaking delegates regularly comprised approximately 40 per cent of the delegates at the annual conferences of the T. & L.C. between 1951 and 1954, Afrikaners approximately 25 per cent of the delegates, non-whites (mainly Coloureds and Indians) approximately 25 per cent and Jews approximately 10 per cent.<sup>1</sup> Very roughly, an equal number of Jewish, Afrikaner and English-speaking trade unionists regularly served on the T. & L.C.n.e.c. between 1951 and 1954.<sup>2</sup>

D. Political Policy and Relations with the  
National Party Government

The T. & L.C. represented a large section of the organised labour movement in mid-1948 and the new N.P. government did not initially adopt an antagonistic attitude towards the Council. The N.P. government appointed a number of T. & L.C. representatives as members of government boards, etc.<sup>3</sup> Thus, for example, J. Calder (the president of the T. & L.C. and the general secretary of the South African Electrical Workers' Association) was appointed as a member of the Industrial Legislation Commission in late 1948.<sup>4</sup>

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1. Ibid.: Cape Town, 16, 17, 18, 19 July 1951, annexure A; Durban, 21, 22, 23, 24 April 1952, annexure A; Port Elizabeth, 30, 31 March, 1, 2 April 1953, annexure I.
  2. Ibid.: Cape Town, 16, 17, 18, 19 July 1951, pp. 23, 31-32; Durban, 21, 22, 23, 24 April 1952, pp. 28-29, 52; Port Elizabeth, 30, 31 March, 1, 2 April 1953, pp. 25-26, 48.
  3. Minutes of T. & L.C.N.E.C. Meeting, 7 September 1948, 18 January 1949, op.cit.
  4. Minutes of T. & L.C.N.E.C. Special Meeting, 19 October 1948, op.cit.

The T. & L.C. consistently condemned the N.P. government for its assault on the civil liberties of the workers and the Council's relations with the government rapidly deteriorated after early 1949.<sup>1</sup> The annual conferences of the T. & L.C. in 1952 and 1953 adopted memoranda which called upon the workers to oust the N.P. government in the 1953 general election.<sup>2</sup>

The T. & L.C. had lobbied the various governments over the years on behalf of individual affiliates and had achieved some success in its appeals, inter alia, for a stronger enforcement of the various shop hour ordinances.<sup>3</sup> However, the strained relationship between the N.P. government and the T. & L.C. made it unlikely that the Council's appeals would achieve any success and the Council's affiliates probably considered that they stood a better chance of success if they appealed directly to the Labour Department and/or the Minister of Labour. Consequently, it is likely that the strained relationship between the N.P. government and the T. & L.C. influenced the decision of numerous trade unions to disaffiliate from the Council.

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1. Minutes of T. & L.C.N.E.C. Meeting, 1948-1954, op.cit.
  2. Minutes of the Annual Conference of the T. & L.C.: Durban, 21, 22, 23, 24 April 1952, pp. 41-48, Declaration of T. & L.C. on the Present Crisis annexure; Port Elizabeth, 30, 31 March, 1, 2 April 1953, pp. 56-58, op.cit.
  3. Minutes of T. & L.C.N.E.C. Meeting, 1931-1948, op.cit.

E. In Defence of the Trade  
Union Movement

The T. & L.C. consistently condemned the N.P. government for its assault on the civil liberties of the workers. Thus, for example, the T. & L.C. condemned the terms of reference of the Industrial Legislation Commission in late 1948<sup>1</sup> and strenuously opposed the introduction of the Suppression of Communism Act in 1950.<sup>2</sup> In addition, the T. & L.C. condemned the government's attempts during the early 1950's to violate the country's constitution in an endeavour to remove the Coloureds and Indians in the Cape from the common voters roll.<sup>3</sup> However, the T. & L.C. conferences generally failed even to discuss the N.P. government's 'social' legislation such as the Mixed Marriages Act.

It must be re-emphasised at this stage that numerous trade unionists feared that the Suppression of Communism Act would be used not only to suppress communism but also to remove militant trade unionists from their union posts. The T. & L.C.n.e.c. resolved in August 1950 to appoint a sub-committee

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1. The T. & L.C. stated that the terms of reference suggested that there was a need for the government to intervene in the domestic affairs of trade unions. For footnote and text see Minutes of T. & L.C.N.E.C. Special Meeting, 19 October 1948, op.cit.; Minutes of a Special Conference of the T. & L.C., Johannesburg, 7, 8, 9 December 1948, pp. 8, 35, 48-49. T.U.C.S.A. Archives, DA 1.1.
  2. Minutes of T. & L.C.N.E.C. Special Meeting, 11 May 1950, 6 June 1950, 13 June 1950, 22 June 1950, op.cit.
  3. Minutes of the Annual Conference of the T. & L.C.: Cape Town, 16, 17, 18, 19 July 1951, pp. 25-31; Durban, 21, 22, 23, 24 April 1952, pp. 41-48; Port Elizabeth, 30, 31 March, 1, 2 April 1953, pp. 56-58, op.cit.

to assist trade unionists who were either "listed" or threatened with "listing" in terms of the Suppression of Communism Act.<sup>1</sup> The T. & L.C.n.e.c. subsequently endorsed by eight votes to seven the sub-committee's decision not to provide any assistance to communist sympathisers.<sup>2</sup> A considerable number of 'centre-right' trade unions such as the I.M.S., the S.A.S.B.O. and the S.A.R.W.A. disaffiliated from the T. & L.C. after the Council's n.e.c. had adopted a proposal in October 1950 which reversed the Council's policy of not assisting communist sympathisers who fell victim to the Act.<sup>3</sup> The T. & L.C.n.e.c. resolved in December 1950 to dissolve the sub-committee.<sup>4</sup>

The T. & L.C. engaged in almost no activity against the Afrikaner nationalist trade union activists after mid-1948.<sup>5</sup> The T. & L.C.'s journal, the Ambag, became defunct in mid-1948 and the Council's n.e.c. duly considered establishing a newspaper to propagate the principles and practical benefits of trade unionism.<sup>6</sup> Trade unions such as the G.W.U.

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1. Minutes of T. & L.C.N.E.C. Meeting, 3 August 1950, op.cit.
  2. Ibid., 7 September 1950, 5 October 1950.
  3. Ibid., 5 October 1950, 12 October 1950, 2 November 1950, 11 January 1951; Minutes of the Biennial Conference of the I.M.S., Johannesburg, 10, 11, 12, 13, 14 December 1951, pp. 31-35. I.M.S. Archives; The Indicator, December 1950; A.E.U.M.R., December 1950.
  4. Minutes of T. & L.C.N.E.C. Adjourned Meeting, 14 December 1950, 18 January 1951, op.cit.
  5. Minutes of T. & L.C.N.E.C. Meeting, 1948-1954, op.cit.
  6. Ibid., 8 March 1949, 5 April 1949, 14 March 1950, 4 September 1951, 6 May 1952, 8 July 1952; Minutes of the Annual Conference of the T. & L.C.: Durban, 18, 19, 20, 21 April 1950, pp. 39-40; Cape Town, 16, 17, 18, 19 July 1951, pp. 12, 14; Durban, 21, 22, 23, 24 April 1952, pp. 29-31, op.cit.

provided considerable funds for the venture and a bilingual newspaper, the Saamtrek, finally appeared in late 1952.<sup>1</sup>

The newspaper remained in existence after the T. & L.C.'s dissolution in late 1954.<sup>2</sup>

#### F. Colour Policy and the Dissolution of the Council

It will be remembered that the T. & L.C.'s constitution contained no colour bar and that the annual conference of the Council in early 1948 instructed the incoming n.e.c. to organise a plebiscite of the affiliates' members to determine whether black trade unions were to be excluded from the Council.<sup>3</sup> The new T. & L.C.n.e.c. resolved not to hold the plebiscite after it had been informed by the Council's legal adviser that the constitution could not be amended without the consent of every affiliated trade union.<sup>4</sup>

The South African Engine Drivers' and Firemen's Association unsuccessfully proposed at the inaugural conference of the South African Trades and Labour Council (1949) that the

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1. Minutes of T. & L.C.N.E.C. Meeting, 5 May 1953, 9 May 1953, op.cit.; Minutes of the Annual Conference of the T. & L.C., Port Elizabeth, 30, 31 March, 1, 2 April 1953, pp. 14-15, op.cit.
  2. Saamtrek, 1952-1956.
  3. See pp. 160, 194 above.
  4. Minutes of T. & L.C.N.E.C. Meeting, 1948-1949, op.cit.  
For information on the constitutional difficulties see p. 224 above.

membership clause of the draft constitution be amended to exclude black trade unions from the new federation.<sup>1</sup> The constitution which was adopted at the inaugural conference stipulated that a two-thirds majority vote was required to amend any clause of the constitution during the federation's first two years of existence.<sup>2</sup> It should be noted that a few black trade unions such as the African Textile Workers' Industrial Union remained affiliated to the Council until its dissolution in late 1954.<sup>3</sup>

The T. & L.C. appreciated that the admission of black trade unions to the Council was a major grievance among many of the trade unions which were disaffiliating from the Council.<sup>4</sup> Consequently, the period between mid-1949 and mid-1951 witnessed the T. & L.C. regularly reviewing the question of amending its membership clause to exclude black trade unions.<sup>5</sup>

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1. Minutes of the Inaugural Conference of the T. & L.C., East London, 26, 27, 28, 29 April 1949, pp. 11-12, op.cit.
  2. T. & L.C. Constitution and Standing Orders Adopted at the Inaugural Conference of the T. & L.C., East London, 26, 27, 28, 29 April 1949, sec. 14 (H), op.cit.
  3. Minutes of the Annual Conference of the T. & L.C.; Cape Town, 16, 17, 18, 19 July 1951, annexure A; Durban, 6, 7, 8 October 1954, annexure I, op.cit.
  4. S.A.T.J., April 1947; Minutes of a Special Conference of the T. & L.C., Durban, 31 October, 1, 2 November 1949, pp. 49-59, op.cit.; Minutes of T. & L.C.N.E.C. Special Meeting, 1 September 1949, 8 September 1949, op.cit.
  5. T. & L.C. Annual Report and Balance Sheet for 1949, pp. 21-22, op.cit.; Minutes of T. & L.C.N.E.C. Special Meeting, 15 September 1949, op.cit.; Minutes of T. & L.C.N.E.C. Adjourned Meeting, 18 January 1951, 22 March 1951, op.cit.

The two-thirds majority vote requirement for constitutional amendments expired in early 1951 and the T. & L.n.e.c. gave notice of its intention to move a resolution at the annual conference in mid-1951 which proposed that black trade unions be excluded from the Council.<sup>1</sup> However, the T. & L.C.n.e.c. withdrew the resolution after it had become apparent that the large trade unions which had disaffiliated from the Council would not return to the fold even if black trade unions were excluded from the Council.<sup>2</sup>

A number of the T. & L.C.'s former affiliates such as the A.S.W., the S.A.T.U. and the South African Engine Drivers' and Firemen's Association established the South African Federation of Trade Unions in late 1951.<sup>3</sup> A few prominent leaders of the T. & L.C. and the South African Federation of Trade Unions played an important role in the establishment of a new trade union federation in 1954, the Trade Union Council of South Africa (T.U.C.S.A.).<sup>4</sup> The T.U.C.S.A., which had been established with the express objective of co-ordinating opposition to the Industrial Legislation Bill, did not admit black trade unions as members.<sup>5</sup>

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1. Minutes of T. & L.C.N.E.C. Adjourned Meeting, 22 March 1951, op.cit.
  2. Minutes of the Annual Conference of the T. & L.C., Cape Town, 16, 17, 18, 19 July 1951, annexure E, op.cit.
  3. Proposed S.A. Federation of Trade Unions. Minutes of a Meeting, Johannesburg, 28 October 1951. T.U.C.S.A. Archives, DA 6-10.
  4. See the T.U.C.S.A. Archives generally and especially the minutes of the Trade Union Unity Committee meetings (reference no. DA 3-8).
  5. Minutes of the Second Unity Conference, 4, 5 October 1954. T.U.C.S.A. Archives, DA 3-8.



The annual conference of the T. & L.C. in October 1954 considered a resolution which called for the dissolution of the Council. Seventeen affiliates such as the B.W.I.U., the G.W.U., the J.M.T.W.U. and the Motor Industry Employees' Union voted in favour of the resolution which was carried on a block vote by 51 683 votes to 23 412. Fourteen trade unions such as the African Textile Workers' Industrial Union, the Textile Workers' Industrial Union, the Food and Canning Workers' Union, the National Baking Industrial Union and the N.U.D.W. opposed the dissolution of the T. & L.C. largely on the ground that the T.U.C.S.A. did not admit black trade unions as members.<sup>1</sup>

G. The Southern Transvaal Local Committee

It will be remembered that leftists dominated the local committee during the 1940's.<sup>2</sup> A decreasing number of communists and other radicals attended the local committee's general meetings from the close of the 1940's and the committee's executive during the first half of the 1950's consisted largely of trade unionists who can be classified as centrists

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1. Minutes of the Annual Conference of the T. & L.C., Durban, 6, 7, 8 October 1954, pp. 1-25, annexure I, op.cit.

For an indication of the block vote strength of the individual trade unions see p. 223 footnote 2 above. It must be noted that the Durban Indian Municipal Employees' Union abstained from voting.

2. See pp. 200-201 above.

in the white labour movement. Thus, for example, C. Jacobson of the B.W.I.U. served on the executive between 1949 and 1954.<sup>1</sup>

The local committee employed a full-time organiser until early 1951 and the organiser assisted a number of the smaller affiliates in organisational activities. The local committee's activities steadily dwindled as the 1950's progressed.<sup>2</sup>

The local committee engaged in no activity against the Afrikaner nationalist trade union activists during the period under review. The local committee held a public protest meeting in mid-1950 to mobilise opposition to the Suppression of Communism Act; and organised a few petitions which called upon the N.P. government to come to grips with the rising cost of living. Although signatures were collected the petitions were never presented to the government.<sup>3</sup>

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1. See the minutes of the annual meetings and executive committee meetings of the Southern Transvaal Local Committee of the T. & L.C., 1948-1954, op.cit. For information on C. Jacobson see p. 145 footnote 3 above.
  2. See the minutes of the annual meetings and executive committee meetings of the Southern Transvaal Local Committee of the T. & L.C., 1948-1954, op.cit.
  3. Ibid.

H. The Council's Former Affiliates  
and the Immediate Post-1954 Period

The majority of the T. & L.C. affiliates, which had remained affiliated to the Council until its dissolution in late 1954, joined the T.U.C.S.A. Although the T.U.C.S.A. opposed many of the N.P. government's policies, it would appear that it focused its attention on lobbying the government over the various issues.<sup>1</sup>

Active resistance to the N.P. administration came from the smaller South African Congress of Trade Unions (S.A.C.T.U.) which, inter alia, participated in the Congress Alliance before going underground in the mid-1960's. The S.A.C.T.U. engaged in considerable organisational activity among black workers during its existence.<sup>2</sup>

The S.A.C.T.U. was established in 1955 with the express objective of founding a non-racial trade union federation. The S.A.C.T.U.'s affiliates had very few white members and

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1. Ruth M. Imrie, A Wealth of People. The Story of the Trade Union Council of South Africa; Jeffrey Lever, "TUCSA : The Trade-Unionism of Moderate Opposition, 1954-1970", in Society in Southern Africa 1975-78. Proceedings of the Association for Sociology in Southern Africa, eds. F.M. Orkin and S.E. Welz, pp. 255-284.
  2. Edward Feit, Workers without Weapons. The South African Congress of Trade Unions and the Organisation of the African Workers; Ken Luckhardt and Brenda Wall, Organise or Starve! The History of the South African Congress of Trade Unions.

I do not intend to discuss the federation at any length. However, it is necessary for us to note that the S.A.C.T.U. was established at a conference in early 1955 which was convened jointly by the Council of Non-European Trade Unions and the former affiliates of the T. & L.C. which had opposed the T. & L.C.'s dissolution at the annual conference of the Council in October 1954.<sup>1</sup> A number of these former affiliates of the T. & L.C. such as the N.U.D.W. (whose membership, it will be recalled, consisted mainly of whites) failed to join the S.A.C.T.U. While the N.U.D.W. leadership favoured joining the S.A.C.T.U. it appreciated that such affiliation was more than its general membership would tolerate.<sup>2</sup>

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1. Ibid.

2. See the N.U.D.W. Archives for the second half of the 1950's.

(B)

THE SOUTH AFRICAN  
LABOUR PARTY

## CHAPTER IX

THE EARLY HISTORY OF THE SOUTH AFRICAN  
LABOUR PARTY : 1910-1931A. The First Decade : 1910-1920

The L.P., which was formally established at a few national conferences in 1909 and 1910, drew its support primarily from the English-speaking immigrant workers.<sup>1</sup> The L.P.'s trade union affiliates, which were mainly from the Transvaal, dominated the Party until the early years of the First World War.<sup>2</sup>

A special conference of the L.P. in August 1915 resolved that the Party would support South Africa's participation in the war on Britain's side.<sup>3</sup> The conference's decision split the L.P. and the leading "anti-militarists" duly established a new political party, the International Socialist League.<sup>4</sup> In addition, the months following the special conference witnessed the disaffiliation of the bulk of the trade union affiliates from the L.P.<sup>5</sup> However, it is by no means clear why the trade unions withdrew from the L.P. since most

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1. See the L.P. Archives for the period.

2. D. Ticktin, op.cit., pp. 424-427; L.P. Table of Branch Affiliation Fees for the Year 1914. Cabinet 2 draw 3. L.P. Archives.

3. Minutes of the Special Conference of the L.P., Johannesburg, 22, 23, 24 August 1915. Minutebooks, etc., no. 6. L.P. Archives.

4. D. Ticktin, "The War Issue and the Collapse of the L.P., 1914-1915", in South African Historical Journal, no. 1, November 1969, p. 71.

The League was the forerunner of the C.P. which was established in 1921.

5. Minutes of L.P.E.C. Meeting, 8 September 1915, 17 November 1915, 2 February 1916, 9 February 1916. Minutebooks, etc., no. 6, op.cit.

of the trade union representatives at the special conference appear to have supported South Africa's participation in the war.<sup>1</sup> By late 1918 the L.P.'s affiliates consisted essentially of constituency branches and no more than two or three trade unions/trade union branches remained affiliated to the Party.<sup>2</sup>

The L.P. advocated a white supremacist policy and called for "the extension of the field of employment for white persons in South Africa".<sup>3</sup> An inaugural conference of the L.P. in 1909 resolved by twenty-three votes to eighteen to include the socialist objective in the Party's constitution - i.e., "the socialisation of the means of production, distribution and exchange...."<sup>4</sup> However, the L.P. tended to propagate a reformist policy in its various election campaigns during the decade. In other words, the L.P.'s election manifestos generally called for a programme of limited nationalisation and for improved social-welfare and industrial legislation rather than for the introduction of a socialist economy.<sup>5</sup>

L. Botha's South African National Party drew its support largely from the Afrikaner electorate. The L.P. concluded an informal electoral pact for the Witwatersrand with the

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1. Minutes of the Special Conference of the L.P., Johannesburg, 22, 23, 24 August 1915, op.cit.
  2. See the L.P. Archives for the period generally.
  3. Constitution and Platform of the L.P. as Amended by the Annual Conference, Pretoria, 1913/1914: Constitution, sec. II (Quote in text); Platform, pp. 11-12, 14. The R. Feldman Papers.
  4. D. Tickin, "The Origins of the L.P.", op.cit., p. 418.
  5. Ibid., pp. 423, 460-463; Constitution and Platform of the L.P. as Amended by the Annual Conference, Pretoria, 1913/1914. Platform, pp. 11-15, op.cit.

South African National Party for the 1910 general election.<sup>1</sup> The L.P. won four seats (all Transvaal) in the 1910 general election and four seats (two Transvaal, one Cape and one Natal) in the October 1915 general election.<sup>2</sup> It won two seats in the 1910 Transvaal provincial council election, twenty-three in the province's March 1914 election and eight in the 1917 election.<sup>3</sup>

The Transvaal was rocked by a large-scale white miners' strike in 1913 and by an extensive white railway workers' strike at the beginning of 1914.<sup>4</sup> The South African Party (S.A.P.) government resorted to strong-armed tactics to break the strikes and, for example, used troops against the strikers and deported strike leaders to Britain. The largest opposition party in parliament and in the Transvaal provincial council, the Unionist Party (which drew its support exclusively from the English-speaking section of the community), endorsed the government's heavy-handed conduct against the strikers.<sup>5</sup> The L.P. swept the urban areas in the March 1914 Transvaal provincial council election and secured a one seat majority in the then forty-five member council.<sup>6</sup> However, the provincial councils were regulated by complex provisions and the L.P. was unable to gain control of the Transvaal provincial government.<sup>7</sup>

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1. D. Ticktin, "The Origins of the L.P.", *op.cit.*, pp. 444, 454-457.

2. *Ibid.*, pp. 466-467, 471; B.M. Schoeman, *op.cit.*, pp. 33, 66.

3. H.B. Kruger, *op.cit.*, p. 63 table 3.

4. F.J. Grobler, *op.cit.*, pp. 175-300.

5. *Ibid.*, p. 303; H.B. Kruger, *op.cit.*, p. 63 table 3; B.M. Schoeman, *op.cit.*, p. 33.

6. H.B. Kruger, *op.cit.*, pp. 101-104.

7. *Ibid.*, pp. 16-17; F.J. Grobler, *op.cit.*, pp. 304-305, 308.



Any prospect of the L.P. consolidating its position after the 1914 Transvaal provincial council election was shattered by the outbreak of World War I. The L.P. split over the war issue and the L.P. was unable to match the Unionist Party's jingoistic appeal to the English-speaking electorate in the late 1915 general election.<sup>1</sup> We noted above that the L.P. won four seats in the general election.

B. The 'Pact' Government and the  
Labour Party Split

The L.P., which continued to draw its support mainly from the English-speaking workers, concentrated its 1920 general election campaign on the high cost of living and on the large profits of businessmen.<sup>2</sup> The L.P. won twenty-one seats (twelve Transvaal, five Natal and four Cape) in the inconclusive general election.<sup>3</sup>

The Unionist Party merged into the S.A.P. after the general election and the strengthened S.A.P. focused its 1921 general election campaign on the danger that a N.P. government would break the country's links with Britain.<sup>4</sup> The S.A.P. improved

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1. D. Ticktin, "The War Issue and the Collapse of the L.P., 1914-1915", op.cit., p. 72.
  2. F.J. Grobler, op.cit., pp. 340-341.
  3. B.M. Schoeman, op.cit., p. 95.
  4. F.J. Grobler, op.cit., pp. 343-344; D.W. Krüger, The Age of the Generals, pp. 113-115.

its position in the general election mainly at the expense of the L.P. and secured a clear majority of the seats in parliament. The L.P. won nine seats (five Transvaal, two Natal, one Cape and one Orange Free State) in the general election.<sup>1</sup>

The 1922 Witwatersrand white miners' strike arose primarily over an attempt to replace a significant portion of the white miners with (cheap) black labour. The strike was characterised by an armed struggle between the military and the strikers. The military, who resorted to the use of artillery, etc., defeated the strikers after a bloody struggle.<sup>2</sup> The strike and related events served as the catalyst for the negotiations between the L.P. and the N.P. for an electoral pact in the forthcoming general election.

F.H.P. Creswell, the parliamentary leader of the L.P., had been opposed to the Party's socialist objective for many years. However, his proposal at the annual conference of the L.P. in January 1923 that the Party's socialist objective be watered-down was widely interpreted as an attempt to facilitate the negotiations between the N.P. and the L.P. for an electoral pact. The annual conference duly adopted a new objective which closely resembled the socialist objective

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1. B.M. Schoeman, *op.cit.*, p. 124.

2. F.J. Grobler, *op.cit.*, pp. 398-462.

which had been adopted by the British Labour Party in 1918:

To secure for the producers by hand or by brain the full fruits of their industry and the most equitable distribution thereof that may be possible upon the basis of common ownership of the means of production and the best obtainable system of popular administration and control of each industry or service, with a view to the ultimate achievement of a Democratic and Socialist Commonwealth.<sup>1</sup>

The annual conference of the L.P. in January 1924 endorsed the terms of an electoral pact between the L.P. and the N.P.<sup>2</sup>

The 'pact' parties secured a majority of the seats in the 1924 general election and formed a coalition government. The S.A.P. won fifty-two seats, the N.P. sixty-three and the L.P. eighteen (twelve Transvaal, three Natal, two Cape and one Orange Free State).<sup>3</sup>

A handful of labour branches were affiliated to the L.P. during the 1920's.<sup>4</sup> Thus, for example, four labour branches were affiliated to the L.P. in January 1926 (i.e., a Pretoria railway workshop branch, the Durban branch of the S.A.T.U., the Turffontein branch of the A.S.W. and the G.W.U.).<sup>5</sup>

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1. Minutes of the Annual Conference of the L.P., Durban, 1, 2, 3, 4 January 1923. L.P. Archives. For information on the British Labour Party's socialist objective see Alan Flanders, Trade Unions, pp. 147-148.
  2. Minutes of the Annual Conference of the L.P., Pretoria, 1, 2, 3 January 1924, op.cit.
  3. B.M. Schoeman, op.cit., p. 144; Thomas Boydell, My Luck's Still In, pp. 42-43.
  4. Minutes of the Annual Conference of the L.P.: Durban, 1, 2, 3, 4 January 1923, list of conference delegates; Kimberley, 1, 2, 3 January 1925, list of conference delegates; Bloemfontein, 1, 2 January 1928, list of conference delegates, op.cit.
  5. Ibid., Port Elizabeth, 1, 2, 3, 4 January 1926, list of conference delegates. Turffontein is a town on the Witwatersrand.

The G.W.U., which affiliated to the L.P. in early 1925, was represented at the 1926 and 1927 L.P. conferences by G. Mason, a supporter of Creswell.<sup>1</sup> G. Weinstock (an opponent of Creswell and a member of the L.P.'s Transvaal provincial executive) successfully lobbied the G.W.U. leadership to rescind its decision to appoint Mason as the Union's delegate to the annual conference of the L.P. in January 1928.<sup>2</sup>

The L.P. was racked by internal dissension during the second half of the 1920's. One of the terms of the electoral pact had been that the N.P. would refrain from attempting to bring about a republic.<sup>3</sup> However, a number of the 'pact' government's policies - e.g., the question of a new flag - were viewed as an attempt to weaken the country's links with Britain. The 'pact' government's stand on the British 'connection' caused serious tension in the L.P. and probably influenced the decision of the Durban branch of the S.A.T.U. in late 1926 to disaffiliate from the Party.<sup>4</sup>

Very broadly, the lobbying in the L.P. towards the close of 1925 over the pending appointment of a third L.P. cabinet minister became intertwined with the intrigues of the majority

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1. Forward, 4 September 1925; C.F. Glass, General Secretary, Witwatersrand Tailors' Association to A. Jamieson, General Secretary, L.P., 27 January 1925. G.W.U. Archives, EBA 3-5; Minutes of the Annual Conference of the L.P.: Port Elizabeth, 1, 2, 3, 4 January 1926, list of conference delegates; Bloemfontein, 1, 2, 3 January 1927, list of conference delegates, op.cit.
  2. Minutes of L.P. Jeppe Branch Meeting, 8 March 1928. Minutebooks, etc., no. 19. L.P. Archives.
  3. T. Boydell, op.cit., pp. 42-43.
  4. Ibid., pp. 66-78; Forward, 10 June 1927, 17 June 1927; A.J. Downes, op.cit., pp. 496-497.

group on the L.P.'s Transvaal provincial executive. The Transvaal provincial executive wished to place the parliamentary L.P. more firmly under 'rank and file' control in order to force the parliamentary L.P. to press the 'pact' government more vigorously for economic concessions for the workers. The nebulous group clustered around the Transvaal provincial executive during the second half of the 1920's included a few M.P.'s such as A. Barlow, M. Kentridge and W. Madeley (who remained loyal to the group notwithstanding his appointment as the L.P.'s third cabinet minister at the close of 1925). The group steadily increased its hold on the L.P.'s national council (i.e., its n.e.c.) and the national council unsuccessfully called upon the parliamentary L.P. to obey its directives in parliament.<sup>1</sup>

The L.P. split into two warring factions in 1928, the National Councillites and the Creswellites. Creswell's supporters claimed that the annual conferences of the L.P. had been packed with anti-Creswell delegates from bogus branches during the second half of the 1920's and repudiated

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1. Morris Kentridge, I Recall, Memoirs of Morris Kentridge; Arthur G. Barlow, Almost in Confidence; Margaret Creswell, An Epoch of the Political History of South Africa in the Life of Frederic Hugh Page Creswell; I. Boydell, op.cit., pp. 39-60 (the most useful published account of the split); Minutes of L.P.T.P.E. Meeting, 1924-1927. Minutebooks, etc., no. 5. L.P. Archives; Minutes of the Annual Conference of the L.P.: Port Elizabeth, 1, 2, 3, 4 January 1926; Bloemfontein, 1, 2, 3 January 1927; Bloemfontein, 1, 2 January 1928, op.cit.; Forward, 8 January 1926, 10 September 1926, 30 September 1927, 23 December 1927, 6 January 1928; M. Kentridge to A. Barlow, 13 November 1925. Scrapbook 2. The A. Barlow Papers; F.H.P. Creswell to Lomax, 27 June 1926. Secretary of Minister of Labour and Defence Files, M.D.L. box 8. Transvaal Archives.

the national council (which had been elected at the annual conference in January 1928) as the legitimate leadership of the Party. Creswell, who was supported by the majority of the parliamentary L.P., organised a special conference for mid-1928. The conference, which was attended by a significant number of the L.P. branches, duly elected an emergency governing executive to office.<sup>1</sup>

The premier, General J.B. Hertzog, dismissed Madeley (the Minister of Posts and Telegraphs and the only National Councillite in the cabinet) from the cabinet in late 1928. Madeley had ignored a cabinet directive and had received a deputation from the I.C.U.<sup>2</sup> Although Madeley agreed to see the I.C.U. delegation, it must be emphasised that both factions of the L.P. advocated a white supremacist policy.<sup>3</sup>

#### C. The Reunification of the Labour Party

The N.P. entered into an electoral pact with the Creswellite faction for the 1929 general election. The N.P. won seventy-eight seats in the general election, the S.A.P. sixty-one,

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1. Minutes of a Special and Emergency Conference of the L.P., Bloemfontein, 30 June, 1 July 1928. Cabinet 2 draw 3.8. L.P. Archives; Report of the Special Commission of Enquiry Appointed by the (L.P.'s) National Council, May 1928, Cabinet 2 draw 3.9. L.P. Archives.
  2. Edward Roux, Time Longer than Rope, pp. 182-183; L.P. Annual Conference, 1929. Report of National Council for the Year 1928. Cabinet 2 draw 3.10. L.P. Archives.
  3. Minutes of the Annual Conference of the L.P. (Creswellites): Bloemfontein, 31 December 1928, 1 January 1929; Johannesburg, 1, 2 January 1930, op.cit.; Minutes of a Special Conference of the L.P. (National Councillites), Durban, 8 July 1928. Cabinet 2 draw 3.9. L.P. Archives.

the Creswell faction five (four Transvaal and one Orange Free State) and the National Council faction three (all Transvaal). The National Council M.P.'s were J. Christie, M. Kentridge and W. Madeley. Although the N.P. secured a majority of the seats in parliament, Hertzog retained two Creswellites (F.H.P. Creswell and H. Sampson) in his cabinet.<sup>1</sup>

The dawn of the 1930's found South Africa in the grips of a deepening depression and the coalition government's austerity measures caused considerable discontent among many Creswellite activists. Thus, for example, numerous Creswellite activists condemned the coalition government for the deteriorating wage position of the railway artisans.<sup>2</sup>

In addition, the N.P. opposed the Creswellites in most of the seats the faction contested in the March 1930 Transvaal provincial council election. All the Creswellite candidates were defeated in the election.<sup>3</sup> The Creswell faction's membership steadily dwindled after the 1929 general election.<sup>4</sup>

The annual conference of the Creswell faction in January 1931 instructed the incoming n.e.c. to terminate the faction's

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1. R.H. Davies, Capital, State and White Labour in S.A. 1900-1960, op.cit., p. 231; B.M. Schoeman, op.cit., p. 173.
  2. Minutes of L.P. (Creswellites) National Administrative Council Meeting, 17 October 1930, 9 April 1931. Minutebooks, etc., no. 7. L.P. Archives; Minutes of a Special Meeting of the National Executive of the National Administrative Council of the L.P. (Creswellites), 17 March 1931. Minutebooks, etc., no. 7, op.cit.
  3. H.B. Kruger, op.cit., pp. 126-130.
  4. Minutes of a Meeting of the National Executive of the National Administrative Council of the L.P. (Creswellites), 24 June 1929, 23 June 1930, op.cit.

participation in the coalition government within twelve months.<sup>1</sup> The Creswellites subsequently agreed to "peace" negotiations with the National Council faction and the L.P. was formally reunited at a special conference in June 1931. The L.P.n.e.c., which was elected at the special conference, was dominated by former Creswellites. Thus, for example, the chairman of the reunited L.P. was Senator J.D.F. Briggs (the chairman of both the T. & L.C. and the Creswell faction).<sup>2</sup> Briggs served as the chairman of the L.P. until the mid-1940's.<sup>3</sup>

The L.P.n.e.c. informed the two labour cabinet ministers (i.e., Creswell and Sampson) in August 1931 that they would automatically forfeit their membership of the L.P. if they remained in the cabinet.<sup>4</sup> Creswell and Sampson forfeited their membership of the L.P. and remained in the cabinet until the formation of the S.A.P.-N.P. coalition government in 1933.<sup>5</sup>

The reunited L.P. was unable to consolidate its position during the depression years of the early 1930's and the evidence suggests that many of the L.P.'s traditional

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1. Minutes of the Annual Conference of the L.P. (Creswellites), Johannesburg, 1, 2 January 1931, op.cit.
  2. Minutes of the Special Peace Conference of the L.P., Johannesburg, 28, 29 June 1931. Cabinet 2 draw 3-17. L.P. Archives; Minutes of the Annual Conference of the L.P. (Creswellites), Johannesburg, 1, 2 January 1931, op.cit.; Minutes of the Annual Conference of the T. & L.C., Durban, 4, 5, 6 April 1931, p. 45, op.cit.
  3. Minutes of the Annual Conference of the L.P., 1931-1946, op.cit.
  4. Minutes of L.P.N.E.C. Meeting, 1 August 1931, op.cit.
  5. Ibid., 1931-1933; R.H. Davies, Capital, State and White Labour in S.A. 1900-1960, op.cit., p. 231.



supporters looked directly to the S.A.P. to solve the country's economic problems. Thus, for example, M. Kentridge and H. Teeger, the L.P. M.P. and M.P.C. for the Johannesburg constituency of Troyeville respectively, deserted the L.P. and joined the S.A.P. in late 1932.<sup>1</sup> Furthermore, the L.P. performed dismally in the Germiston parliamentary by-election in late 1932 and polled 132 votes to the N.P.'s 3 076 and the S.A.P.'s 4 257. A Creswellite, G. Brown, had won the Germiston seat in the 1929 general election.<sup>2</sup>

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1. Minutes of L.P.N.E.C. Meeting, 15 December 1932, op.cit.; T. Boydell, op.cit., p. 59; H.B. Kruger, op.cit., pp. 129, 134. H. Teeger had been one of the two National Council faction candidates who had successfully contested the 1930 Transvaal provincial council election. H.B. Kruger, op.cit., pp. 126-129.
  2. B.M. Schoeman, op.cit., pp. 161, 185.

## CHAPTER X

## A LIMITED REVIVAL : 1930-1939

A. Membership Characteristics

The G.W.U., which had allied itself with the National Council faction, disaffiliated from the faction at the close of the 1920's.<sup>1</sup> The Turffontein branch of the A.S.W., which had supported the Creswell faction, allowed its affiliation to the L.P. to lapse during the early 1930's.<sup>2</sup> With the exception of the Turffontein branch of the A.S.W., no trade union/trade union branch was affiliated to the L.P. during the 1930's.<sup>3</sup> It should be noted that the L.P. actively encouraged trade unions to affiliate to the Party during the decade.<sup>4</sup>

The L.P. had a small number of constituency branch members during the 1930's.<sup>5</sup> The L.P.'s constituency branch membership increased slightly during the decade and in 1938 twenty-six branches were affiliated to the Party on a total member-

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1. B.M. Touyz, op.cit., p. 180; Minutes of a Special Conference of the L.P. (National Councillites), Durban, 8 July 1928, list of conference delegates, op.cit.
  2. Minutes of the Annual Conference of the L.P. (Creswellites), Bloemfontein, 31 December 1928, 1 January 1929, list of conference delegates, op.cit.; Minutes of the Annual Conference of the L.P., 1932-1934, lists of conference delegates, op.cit.
  3. Minutes of the Annual Conference of the L.P., 1932-1940, lists of conference delegates, op.cit.; L.P. Affiliated Membership Figures for 1938. Annexure, in Minutes of the Annual Conference of the L.P., Johannesburg, 31 December 1938, 1 January 1939, op.cit.
  4. Minutes of the Annual Conference of the L.P., 1932-1940, op.cit.
  5. Ibid., 1932-1940, lists of conference delegates.

ship of 424 (sic). Twenty-one of the branches with a total membership of 359 were from the Transvaal.<sup>1</sup>

Although the English-speaking section remained dominant, the 1930's witnessed the influx of a considerable number of Afrikaners into the L.P.<sup>2</sup> Numerous Afrikaner miners and several former Roosites joined the L.P. during the first half or so of the 1930's.<sup>3</sup> The number of Afrikaners in the L.P. appears to have declined towards the close of the 1930's.<sup>4</sup>

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1. L.P. Affiliated Membership Figures for 1938, op.cit.
  2. The statement is based largely on the names of the L.P.'s rank and file and executive members. See the L.P. minutes and correspondence in the L.P. Archives.
  3. Minutes of Special Meeting Organised by the L.P.'s Propaganda Committee, Johannesburg, 18 September 1932. Minutebooks, etc., no. 36. L.P. Archives; Minutes of L.P. Organising Committee Meeting, 17 August 1933. Minutebooks, etc., no. 36, op.cit.; Minutes of L.P. Council of Action Meeting, 1933-1934. Minutebooks, etc., no. 17. L.P. Archives; Minutes of L.P.N.E.C. Meeting, 24 April 1934, 13 August 1934, op.cit.; (?) to James (Briggs), 24 May 1935. Cover 2-3. L.P. Archives.

T. Roos was a founder member of General J.B. Hertzog's N.P. Roos, who was the Transvaal leader of the N.P., resigned from his cabinet post in 1929 largely on the ground of ill health and retired from politics. In December 1932 he called upon the government to abandon the Gold Standard and re-entered politics. His endeavours to form a national government headed by himself were unsuccessful and he subsequently established the Centre Party which won two seats in the 1933 general election. The Centre Party was dissolved shortly after Roos's death in 1935. However, the Centre Party was subsequently revived and unsuccessfully contested eight seats in the 1936 Transvaal provincial council election. The Centre Party became defunct shortly after the election. Dictionary of South African Biography, vol. 1, pp. 679-681; D. O'Meara, "Class, Capital and Ideology in the Development of Afrikaner Nationalism", op.cit., pp. 33-39; H.B. Kruger, op.cit., pp. 136-140.

4. The statement is based largely on the names of the L.P.'s conference delegates and branch members.

The L.P. struggled to adapt itself to meet the aspirations of its new Afrikaner members. The L.P.'s December 1932/January 1933 and December 1933 conferences injudiciously rejected a proposed constitutional amendment which recognised divine guidance in the affairs of nations.<sup>1</sup> A significant number of Afrikaner members resigned from the L.P. after the defeat of the proposed constitutional amendment at the December 1933 conference.<sup>2</sup> As a sop to the Afrikaner members the L.P.'s December 1934 conference adopted a constitutional amendment which stated that

the L.P. acknowledges the religious convictions and aspirations and will safeguard the religious freedom of all sections of our people.<sup>3</sup>

Finally, it should be noted that the L.P.'s conference agendas were generally published in English and Afrikaans during the 1930's.<sup>4</sup>

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1. Minutes of the Annual Conference of the L.P.: Johannesburg, 31 December 1932, 1 January 1933; Johannesburg, 30, 31 December 1933, op.cit.
  2. Minutes of L.P.N.E.C. Meeting, 9 February 1934, op.cit.; Minutes of L.P. Bezuidenhout Valley B.E.C. Meeting, 26 January 1934. Minutebooks, etc., no. 12. L.P. Archives; Forward, 5 January 1934, 19 January 1934.
  3. Minutes of the Annual Conference of the L.P., Johannesburg, 29, 30 December 1934, op.cit.
  4. The L.P.'s conference agendas are filed with the Minutes of the Annual Conference of the L.P., 1932-1940, op.cit.

B. System of Government and  
the Leadership

The annual conference of the L.P. was the final arbiter of the Party's affairs. The resolutions at the conference were decided either by means of a show of hands or - if demanded by a delegate - by a block vote. A branch's block vote was equivalent to its affiliated membership.<sup>1</sup>

However, all the elections at the conference were determined by means of a block vote. The chairman, the treasurer, the full-time general secretary and approximately fourteen members of the general n.e.c. were elected at the conference for a one year term of office. In addition, in terms of the constitution each provincial conference was entitled to elect two members to the L.P.n.e.c. for a one year term of office.<sup>2</sup> However, the L.P. had very few members in the Cape and the Orange Free State and it would appear that the two provinces' n.e.c. members were generally elected by the Party's annual conferences.<sup>3</sup>

The L.P.'s head office was in Johannesburg. Few Afrikaners served on the L.P.n.e.c. at the beginning of the 1930's. The number of Afrikaners on the L.P.n.e.c. steadily increased during

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1. The constitutional provisions are derived from a general study of the L.P. Archives.

2. Ibid.

3. Minutes of the Annual Conference of the L.P., 1932-1940, op.cit.

the first half of the 1930's and Afrikaners regularly comprised approximately a third of the members on the n.e.c. during the second half of the decade.<sup>1</sup>

Most of the L.P.n.e.c. members during the period under review in the thesis were retired/active trade union leaders/officials. The intellectuals (e.g., lawyers and pharmacists) and businessmen (e.g., retailers and insurance agents) never comprised more than a significant minority on the L.P.n.e.c.<sup>2</sup>

The L.P.n.e.c. and the Party's Transvaal provincial executive were dominated during the 1930's by members from the nebulous 'centre-right' section of the L.P. Indeed, it was only during the second half of the 1930's that left-leaning members comprised a significant minority on the n.e.c. and the Transvaal provincial executive.<sup>3</sup>

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1. The statements are derived from an examination of the names of the L.P.n.e.c. members over the years. See the election results in Minutes of the Annual Conference of the L.P., 1932-1940, op.cit.
  2. The statements are based on a chart I compiled over a considerable period and it is impossible to give any specific references to the above.
  3. The statements are based on a general impression of the L.P. Archives and especially on (1) Minutes of L.P.N.E.C. Meeting, 1931-1940, op.cit., and (2) Minutes of L.P.T.P.E. Meeting, 1937-1940, Minutebooks, etc., no.28, L.P. Archives.

## C. Some Policy Considerations

### 1. Economic Policy

There was a broad consensus among the L.P. branches over the Party's economic policy.<sup>1</sup> The socialist objective, which had been adopted at the annual conference in 1923, remained embodied in the constitution. The 1938/1939 L.P. conference rejected a resolution which proposed that the socialist objective be deleted from the constitution.<sup>2</sup>

The L.P. conferences during the 1930's passed resolutions which called for considerable state intervention in the economy. Thus, for example, the resolutions called for the nationalisation of the manufacturing industries, the mining industry, all land and the medical profession.<sup>3</sup>

The L.P. conferences during the decade also called for improved social-welfare and industrial legislation. Thus, for example, the conferences urged the 'fusion' government to introduce an improved old age pension scheme and to provide greater financial assistance to the underground miners who had contracted phthisis.<sup>4</sup>

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1. Minutes of the Annual Conference of the L.P., 1932-1940, op.cit.
  2. Ibid., Johannesburg, 31 December 1938, 1 January 1939.  
For the L.P.'s socialist objective see pp. 243-244 above.
  3. Minutes of the Annual Conference of the L.P., 1932-1940, op.cit.
  4. Ibid., 1935-1939.

It will be remembered that the L.P. propagated a white supremacist policy.<sup>1</sup> The L.P. conferences during the 1930's failed to adopt any specific policies in regard to Coloureds and Indians.<sup>2</sup> The Party's "Native policy" was based on a memorandum which was adopted at the 1932/1933 conference. The memorandum advocated a policy of COMPLETE separation between white and black. Blacks would not be forced (sic) to leave the white areas and a labour government would provide adequate land and finance to encourage the blacks to move to certain designated reserves. The reserves would eventually be granted limited autonomy.<sup>3</sup>

A few of the L.P.'s branches (e.g. the Von Brandis branch and the Mayfair branch) argued that the separation policy was impractical. However, the parliamentary L.P. vigorously defended the separation policy and the annual conferences of the L.P. during the second half of the 1930's consistently rejected resolutions which called for a review of the Party's colour policy.<sup>4</sup>

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1. See p. 240 above.

2. Minutes of the Annual Conference of the L.P., 1932-1940, op.cit.

3. Memorandum on the Native Policy of the Party, Submitted by the National Executive. Annexure, in Minutes of the Annual Conference of the L.P., Johannesburg, 31 December 1932, 1 January 1933, op.cit.

4. Minutes of the Annual Conference of the L.P., 1937-1939, op.cit.  
Fordsburg, Mayfair and Von Brandis are suburbs in the Johannesburg area.



While the Von Brandis branch favoured a softer colour policy, a few Afrikaner-dominated branches (e.g., the Fordsburg and Mayfair branches) advocated a policy which closely resembled the N.P.'s colour policy.<sup>1</sup> Thus, for example, the Fordsburg branch moved a resolution at the January 1937 conference of the L.P. which proposed

That pending the acceptance of the L.P.'s separation policy by parliament, this conference requests the government to fix separate spheres of employment for Europeans and natives. The minimum wage of European unskilled workers shall be 10/- a day.

The conference referred the resolution to the L.P.n.e.c. for consideration.<sup>2</sup> However, the L.P.n.e.c. failed to discuss the resolution.<sup>3</sup>

The L.P.'s public representatives tended to support calls for a job reservation or quota system to protect the white workers. Thus, for example, in mid-1935 the L.P.'s Transvaal M.P.C.'s supported a motion which called upon the central government to allow the provincial council to introduce legislation which would prohibit blacks, Coloureds and Indians from driving vehicles owned by whites - the objective of the motion was, of course, to create employment opportunities for whites. Although the motion was carried in the provincial council by

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1. Minutes of the Annual Conference of the L.P., 1937-1939, op.cit.  
For the N.P.'s labour policy see pp. 57-58 above.
  2. Minutes of the Annual Conference of the L.P., Johannesburg, 2, 3 January 1937, op.cit.
  3. Minutes of L.P.N.E.C. Meeting, 1937-1938, op.cit.

twenty-one votes to seven, the central government declined to empower the council to introduce the proposed legislation.<sup>1</sup>

In 1936 the L.P. M.P.'s voted in favour of the U.P. government's bill to remove the Cape blacks from the common voters roll.<sup>2</sup> On the other hand, the parliamentary L.P. opposed a N.P. proposal in 1936 to remove the Coloureds and Indians in the Cape from the common voters roll;<sup>3</sup> and in early 1939 supported a motion which called for blacks to be incorporated into the Industrial Conciliation Act's machinery. The motion had been moved by one of the M.P.'s who represented blacks in parliament.<sup>4</sup>

### 3. Civil Rights and Anti-Fascism

The L.P. viewed with concern the suppression of the trade union movements in Italy and Nazi Germany and the annual conferences of the Party during the 1930's consistently condemned fascism and nazism.<sup>5</sup> The L.P. opposed South Africa's participation in the 1936 Berlin Olympics;<sup>6</sup> and in early 1937 the L.P. M.P.'s voted against the 'fusion'

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1. Votes and Proceedings of the Transvaal Provincial Council, vol. XVIII : 22 May 1935, p. 84; 5 June 1935, pp. 139-140.
  2. Hansard, Joint Sitting of Both Houses of Parliament, 6 April 1936, cols. 1207-1210.
  3. Ibid., 24 February 1936, cols. 142-143.
  4. Hansard, Assembly Debates, vol. 34, 18 April 1939, cols. 3057, 3092-3093, 3101.
  5. Minutes of the Annual Conference of the L.P., 1932-1940, op.cit.
  6. Minutes of L.P.N.E.C. Meeting, 13 January 1936, op.cit.; Hansard, Assembly Debates, vol. 26, 9 March 1936, cols. 930-945.

government's immigration bill which was designed to curb the influx of Jewish refugees from Germany.<sup>1</sup>

The T. & L.C. usually invited a variety of labour organisations such as trade unions, the C.P. and the L.P. to attend the Council's anti-fascist/nazi conferences, etc.<sup>2</sup>

The L.P. wished to be regarded as the political expression of the (white) labour movement and was therefore reluctant to co-operate with or to submerge its identity among left-wing and/or ephemeral workers' parties such as the C.P. and the Farmers' and Workers' Party. Consequently, the L.P. generally declined to support the T. & L.C.'s anti-fascist/nazi activities.<sup>3</sup>

The strained relationship between the L.P. and the T. & L.C. in mid-1934 over the parliamentary L.P.'s failure to oppose the Customs Tariff Amendment Bill and the Entertainment Censorship Amendment Bill probably influenced the L.P.n.e.c.'s

1. Hansard, Assembly Debates, vol. 28: 13 January 1937, cols. 128-134; 19 January 1937, cols. 336-338.
2. For examples of the T. & L.C.'s anti-fascist activities see pp. 171-177 above.
3. Minutes of the Annual Conference of the L.P., Johannesburg, 29, 30 December 1934, op.cit.; Minutes of L.P.N.E.C. Meeting, 13 August 1934, 19 November 1935, 22 July 1936, 23 September 1936, op.cit.; Minutes of L.P.N.E.C. Adjourned Meeting, 31 August 1937, op.cit.; Minutes of L.P.N.E.C. Special Meeting, 7 July 1936, op.cit.; Minutes of a Joint Meeting of the Executives of the L.P. and the T. & L.C., 23 August 1936. Minutebooks, etc., no. 7. L.P. Archives; Minutes of a Meeting between the Trade Union Political Wing and the L.P. in Connection with the Proposed Conference, 5 March 1936. Cover 12-4. L.P. Archives. The Farmers' and Workers' Party was established by the ageing F.A.W. Lucas (the retired chairman of the Wage Board and a former L.P. activist who had been elected to the Transvaal provincial council in 1914). The Party remained in existence for a short while during the mid-1930's.

decision to boycott the inaugural conference of the A.F.L. in August 1934.<sup>1</sup> It will be remembered that in 1933 the Commissioner of Customs clamped down on the general importation of communist literature. The T. & L.C. successfully challenged the legality of the Commissioner's action in the Supreme Court in late 1933 and the 'fusion' government amended the relevant act in early 1934 to enable the Commissioner to confiscate any imported literature he wished.<sup>2</sup> The government also amended the Entertainment Censorship Act in early 1934 in order to prohibit private clubs from showing uncensored films (e.g., communist and socialist propaganda films).<sup>3</sup> The July 1934 edition of the T. & L.C.'s journal, the Trades and Labour Journal of South Africa, castigated the L.P. M.P.'s for their failure to oppose the bills when they were considered by parliament.<sup>4</sup>

#### D. A Limited Revival

The continued influx of Afrikaners into the Transvaal urban areas steadily reduced the proportion of the Anglophone electorate in the urban constituencies during the period under review in the thesis.<sup>5</sup> A politically fluid situation was

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1. For information on the A.F.L. see pp. 173-175 above.
  2. See pp. 171-172 above.
  3. Minutes of the Annual Conference of the T. & L.C., Durban, 20, 21, 22, 23, 24 April 1935, p. 49, op.cit.
  4. Hansard, Assembly Debates, vol. 22: 1 February 1934, cols. 157-161; 21 February 1934, col. 710; 23 February 1934, col. 726; Trades and Labour Journal of South Africa, July 1934.
  5. Report of the Industrial Legislation Commission, pp. 13-14. U.G. 37 1935; S. Pauw, Die Beroepsarbeid van die Afrikaner in die Stad, p. 127 table IX, p. 135; N.M. Stultz, op.cit., pp. 94-96.

brought about by the formation of the S.A.P. - N.P. coalition government in 1933, the 'fusion' of the two parties in mid-1934 and the subsequent establishment of two break-away parties (i.e., the new N.P. and the Dominion Party). A number of former S.A.P. members refused to support 'fusion' and established the Dominion Party which was dedicated to retaining and strengthening the country's links with Britain.<sup>1</sup>

The N.P. and the S.A.P. entered into an electoral pact for the 1933 general election and provincial council elections. The L.P. contested a handful of seats in the 1933 elections and won two seats (one Natal and one Transvaal) in the general election and one seat in the Transvaal provincial council election. Both victories in the Transvaal were in the Witwatersrand constituency of Benoni where W. Madeley was returned as the M.P. and D. Reich, a former president of the M.W.U., as the M.P.C.<sup>2</sup>

The political flux of the period facilitated the L.P.'s success in two Witwatersrand parliamentary by-elections after the 1933 general election. M.J. Van den Berg (the East Rand organiser of the M.W.U. and a member of the L.P.n.e.c.) became the first Afrikaner L.P. M.P. when he won the Krugersdorp by-election in early 1934;<sup>3</sup> and J. Christie (a pharmacist and

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1. D.W. Krüger, op.cit., p. 167.

2. B.M. Schoeman, op.cit., pp. 185-202; H.B. Kruger, op.cit., pp. 131-134; M.W.U. Names and Addresses of Executive Committee, 1931. Dept. of Labour Files, box 708, op.cit.

3. B.M. Schoeman, op.cit., p. 214; Minutes of the Annual Conference of the L.P., Johannesburg, 30, 31 December 1933, op.cit.; Minutes of L.P.N.E.C. Meeting, 9 February 1934, op.cit.; Minutes of L.P. N.E.C. Adjourned Meeting, 16 February 1934, op.cit.

a L.P. stalwart) secured victory in the Rosettenville by-election in mid-1936.<sup>1</sup> The L.P. also successfully contested two provincial council by-elections on the Witwatersrand in late 1934 and early 1936.<sup>2</sup>

The trade union movement did not view the N.P. with hostility during the Party's first two years or so of existence. Thus, for example, J. Cornelius (in her then capacity as president of the G.W.U.) forwarded a letter to the pro-N.P. newspaper, Die Republikein, in late 1935 in which she condemned the U.P. government for its handling of a Wage Board Recommendation for the South African clothing industry. The U.P. was engaged in a straight fight with the N.P. in the Delarey parliamentary by-election and Cornelius called upon all voters to support the N.P. against the big-business oriented U.P. in the election.<sup>3</sup>

The N.P. approached the L.P. for an informal electoral pact for the September 1936 Transvaal provincial council election.<sup>4</sup> However, the L.P. undoubtedly believed that it was on the verge of a major electoral breakthrough on the Witwatersrand and resolved to fight the provincial council election on its own.<sup>5</sup>

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1. B.M. Schoeman, op.cit., p. 216; L.P. The Candidates Who's Who (n.d.). G.W.U. Archives, EBA 3-6.
  2. H.B. Kruger, op.cit., p. 135.
  3. Die Republikein, 15 November 1935; B.M. Schoeman, op.cit., p. 215.
  4. Report by C. Henderson, marked confidential and dated 11 May 1936. Cover 12-4. L.P. Archives; J.L. Basson, J.G. Strijdom, Sy Politieke Loopbaan van 1929 tot 1948, p. 147.
  5. Report by C. Henderson, marked confidential and dated 11 May 1936, op.cit.; Report by C. Henderson, marked confidential (n.d.). Cover 12-4, op.cit.; Duncan (Burnside) to Charlie (Henderson), 19 May 1936. Cover 12-4, op.cit.

The U.P. won forty-nine seats in the 1936 Transvaal provincial council election, the Dominion Party one, the N.P. one and the L.P. six. All the L.P.'s victories were on the Witwatersrand and the Party's M.P.C.'s included two lawyers (J. Duthie and D. Epstein) and an insurance agent (A. Carlisle).<sup>1</sup> It will be noted from Table V that the L.P. put up a credible performance in the urban areas and secured almost a quarter of the urban vote. The Table also shows that the N.P. enjoyed little support in the urban areas.

The L.P. failed to win either a parliamentary or a provincial council by-election in the Transvaal between the 1936 provincial council election and the 1938 general election. On the other hand, the N.P. won two (one rural and one urban) parliamentary by-elections in the Transvaal in 1937.<sup>2</sup>

A few trade unions such as the G.W.U. endorsed the L.P.'s cause in the mid-1938 general election.<sup>3</sup> However, it will be recalled that the trade union movement failed to throw its weight behind the L.P. in the election and that A.A. Moore (the president of the T. & L.C.) called upon all workers to support the U.P. in the election in his keynote address to the annual conference of the T. & L.C. in early 1938.<sup>4</sup>

In addition, J.A. Van den Berg (the president of the M.W.U. and a member of the T. & L.C.n.e.c.) appeared on the platform of a rally in support of the N.P. candidate in the Krugersdorp constituency - a seat held by the L.P. since 1934. In his address

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1. H.B. Kruger, *op.cit.*, pp. 136-140.

2. *Ibid.*, pp. 140-141; B.M. Schoeman, *op.cit.*, p. 216.

3. B.M. Touyz, *op.cit.*, pp. 106, 183-184.

4. See pp. 169-170 above.

TABLE V

THE LABOUR PARTY'S AND THE NATIONAL PARTY'S ELECTION PERFORMANCES  
IN THE TRANSVAAL : THE SEPTEMBER 1936 TRANSVAAL PROVINCIAL COUNCIL  
ELECTION AND THE MID-1938 GENERAL ELECTION.<sup>1</sup>

THE SEPTEMBER 1936 TRANSVAAL PROVINCIAL COUNCIL ELECTION									
	SEATS CONTESTED			SEATS WON			PERCENTAGE OF VOTES CAST		
PARTY	TOTAL	URBAN	RURAL	TOTAL	URBAN	RURAL	TOTAL	URBAN	RURAL
L.P.	20	19	1	6	6	0	12,7	23,6	-
N.P.	25	8	17	1	0	1	16,5	8,7	25

THE MID-1938 GENERAL ELECTION									
	SEATS CONTESTED			SEATS WON			PERCENTAGE OF VOTES CAST		
PARTY	TOTAL	URBAN	RURAL	TOTAL	URBAN	RURAL	TOTAL	URBAN	RURAL
L.P.	23	22	1	2	2	0	9,4	15,5	-
N.P.	45	21	24	1	0	1	23,7	17,5	33,1

1. The percentages are derived from the individual constituency results. The rural/urban division for the two elections is based on H.B. Kruger's rural/urban classification of the seats in the 1936 provincial council election. See H.B. Kruger, *op.cit.*, pp. 136-140; B.M. Schoeman, *op.cit.*, pp. 216-237.



to the rally Van den Berg condemned the social intercourse between white females and non-white males at the T. & L.C. conferences.<sup>1</sup>

It will be remembered that in 1937 the G.W.U. successfully turned Afrikaner nationalist allegations that white females were dancing with blacks into a propaganda weapon against the christian-national trade unionists.<sup>2</sup> However, despite the adverse criticism which the 'kaffer dancing' allegations had evoked, a major thrust of the N.P.'s election campaign was that widespread miscegenation would result from the U.P. policy of allowing mixed (i.e., white - non-white) marriages. The U.P., which had earlier roundly condemned the Afrikaner nationalists' 'kaffer dancing' allegations, was thus given another opportunity to claim that Afrikaner females had been slighted.<sup>3</sup>

The L.P.'s election manifesto failed to come to grips with the general colour question and simply reaffirmed the Party's policy of complete separation between white and black. While the manifesto did not advocate the introduction of a socialist economy, it called for considerable intervention by the state in the economy and for the nationalisation of all privately owned utility corporations and the mining industry. The manifesto also called for improved social-welfare legislation.<sup>4</sup>

The U.P. won 111 seats in the general election, the N.P. 27, the

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1. Star, 11 May 1938; G.W.U. Delegates to the T. & L.C. Conference to the Editor, the Star, letter dated 12 May 1938. G.W.U. Archives, EBA 2.
  2. See pp. 100-101 above.
  3. B.M. Touyz, op.cit., pp. 104-106.
  4. Labour Stands for Bread and Butter Politics (General Election 1938), L.P. The Way to Peace and Prosperity. Cabinet 2 draw 1. L.P. Archives.

Dominion Party 8, the Socialist Party 1 and the L.P. 3 (i.e., W. Madeley and M.J. Van den Berg on the Witwatersrand and the Rev. Miles Cadman in Durban).<sup>1</sup> D. Burnside won a Durban seat for the Socialist Party. Burnside, who had originally secured election to the seat on a L.P. ticket in 1933, duly returned to the L.P. fold.<sup>2</sup>

It will be noted from Table V that the L.P.'s share of the urban vote in the Transvaal decreased from 23,6 per cent in the 1936 provincial council election to only 15,5 per cent in the 1938 general election. However, the L.P. outpolled the N.P. in a number of Witwatersrand constituencies - including several with a substantial mining electorate.<sup>3</sup> It would appear that both former English-speaking and Afrikaans-speaking supporters deserted the L.P. in the general election. The Afrikaner nationalists' trade union activities probably contributed to the decline in the L.P.'s Afrikaner support base.

It will also be noted from Table V that the N.P. secured approximately a third of the rural vote and 17,5 per cent of the urban vote in the Transvaal in the general election. Nevertheless, the N.P. failed to consolidate its position in the province and the Party's only success was in the rural Waterberg constituency where J.G. Strijdom was returned as the M.P. The N.P. won twenty seats in the Cape and six in the Orange Free State.<sup>4</sup>

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1. B.M. Schoeman, *op.cit.*, pp. 216-237.

2. *Ibid.*, pp. 220, 236-237.

3. *Ibid.*, pp. 216-237.

4. *Ibid.*

M.J. Van den Berg launched a campaign against the M.W.U. leadership towards the close of 1938. He condemned the constitutional practice and administration of the Union; and castigated the M.W.U. leadership for the extraordinary phthisis agreement negotiated by the Union.<sup>1</sup>

At the close of 1938 the Mining Unions' Joint Committee, which comprised the three mining workers' trade unions and a number of craft unions which had members in the mining industry, condemned M.J. Van den Berg's campaign as a flagrant interference in the domestic affairs of a trade union. The L.P.n.e.c. defended Van den Berg's strictures of the M.W.U. leadership and criticised the Mining Unions' Joint Committee's constituent trade unions for their lack of support for the L.P. Reference was made to A.A. Moore's (the general secretary of the S.A.R.W.A.) speech at the annual T. & L.C. conference just prior to the general election and to J.A. Van den Berg (the president of the M.W.U.) who had appeared on the election platform of M.J. Van den Berg's N.P. opponent in the Krugersdorp constituency.<sup>2</sup> Trade unionists generally argued that M.J. Van den Berg's campaign assisted the Afrikaner nationalists in their endeavours to undermine the M.W.U. leadership.<sup>3</sup>

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1. The Indicator, February 1939; Die Transvaler, 29 November 1938; Hansard, Assembly Debates, vol. 32, 15 September 1938, col. 2856; Minutes of L.P.N.E.C. Sub-Committee Meeting, 5 January 1939. Minutebooks, etc., no. 7. L.P. Archives; Minutes of L.P.N.E.C. Special Meeting, 29 December 1938, op.cit. For information on the M.W.U. see pp. 111-124 above and on M.J. Van den Berg see pp. 262, 266-267 above and 280 below.
  2. Star, 11 May 1938; Minutes of L.P.N.E.C. Special Meeting, 29 December 1938, op.cit.; Minutes of L.P.N.E.C. Sub-Committee Meeting, 5 January 1939, op.cit.
  3. A.E.U.M.R., June 1939; Minutes of the Annual Conference of the T. & L.C., Kimberley, 10, 11, 12, 13, 14 April 1939, pp. 137, 140-141, 143, op.cit.

Afrikaner nationalists viewed the L.P.'s tentative move (it never went beyond this point) to challenge abuses in the trade union movement with alarm. The general election clearly indicated that future N.P. success in Witwatersrand working class constituencies depended, to an extent, on a further weakening of the L.P.'s influence among the Afrikaner electorate. Miners who supported the N.R.T. undermined mining committees established by M.J. Van den Berg; and the period witnessed a campaign to win Afrikaner L.P. leaders to the N.P. Among the converts to the N.P. were Dr. V. Odendaal (a former Roosite and the 1938 chairman of the L.P. in the Transvaal) and H.J. Cilliers (a prominent member of the M.W.U.). However, Cilliers subsequently withdrew his resignation from the L.P.<sup>1</sup>

The U.P. was deeply divided over the question of South Africa's participation in World War II. A motion which called for South Africa's participation in the war on Britain's side was carried in parliament in September 1939 by eighty votes to sixty-seven. The Smuts faction of the U.P., the Dominion Party, the L.P. and the three M.P.'s who represented the blacks voted in favour of the war motion; and Smuts duly formed a coalition government

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1. See *Die Transvaler* for the period generally; L. Naudé, op.cit., p. 63; *Forward*, 20 January 1939; *Cape Times*, 9 January 1939, 13 January 1939; Venter Odendaal ... to *Die Algemene Sekretaris*, S.A. Arbeids Party, 7 January 1939. Cabinet 2 draw 1-54. L.P. Archives; Statement on the defections from the L.P. (n.d.). Cabinet 2 draw 1-54, op.cit.; J.L. Basson, op.cit., pp. 226-227. For further information on H.J. Cilliers see p. 288 below.

with his faction of the U.P., the Dominion Party and the L.P. The L.P.'s representative in the cabinet was W. Madeley (the parliamentary leader of the L.P.), who was appointed Minister of Labour.<sup>1</sup> Madeley remained in his cabinet post throughout the war years. The L.P.'s participation in the war coalition government compromised its socialist objective and policy, and emphasised its British 'connection'. The result was undoubtedly a reduction in the L.P.'s Afrikaner support base.

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1. Michael Roberts and A.E.G. Trollip, The South African Opposition 1939-1945, p. 20.

## CHAPTER XI

THE YEARS OF INFLUENCE AND THE  
SOUTH AFRICAN LABOUR PARTY  
SPLIT : 1939-1948

A. Membership Characteristics

It will be remembered that no trade union/trade union branch was affiliated to the L.P. at the close of the 1930's and that the Party had 424 constituency branch members in 1938.<sup>1</sup> The L.P.'s constituency branch membership decreased during the early years of the Second World War and in late 1941 the Party had 356 members.<sup>2</sup> However, the L.P.'s constituency branch membership increased rapidly after early 1942. Thus, for example, in early 1943 forty-four branches were affiliated to the L.P. on a total membership of 1 175 and in late 1945 sixty-six branches were affiliated to the Party on a total membership of 1 961.<sup>3</sup> The L.P. drew the bulk of its constituency branch membership from Natal and the Transvaal and, for instance, in late 1945 the Party had 1 019 members in the Transvaal, 693 in Natal, 229 in the Cape and 20 in the Orange Free State.<sup>4</sup>

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1. See pp. 251-252 above.

2. List of Branches (1941). Annexure, in Minutes of the Annual Conference of the L.P., Johannesburg, 27, 28 December 1941, op.cit.

3. L.P. Branch Membership Figures for 1943. Cabinet 2 draw 3-37. L.P. Archives; L.P. Branch Membership Figures for December 1945. Cabinet 2 draw 3-42. L.P. Archives.

4. L.P. Branch Membership Figures for December 1945, op.cit.

The first half of the 1940's witnessed the emergence of many so called "mushroom" constituency branches - i.e., newly established branches which affiliated to the L.P. on large memberships and then faded away.<sup>1</sup> It would appear that a large majority of the new constituency branch members were English-speaking.<sup>2</sup>

The L.P. launched a campaign at the beginning of 1942 to bring about co-operation between the Party and the trade union movement.<sup>3</sup> It will be noted from Table VI that six trade unions affiliated to the L.P. during the course of 1942 and that seven trade unions and one trade union branch were affiliated to the Party at the close of 1945. The L.P.'s trade union affiliates were either national unions or regional unions from the Transvaal.<sup>4</sup>

While further research is necessary, it is probable that the decisions of a number of the trade unions to affiliate to the L.P. were strongly influenced by the presence of the Party in the coalition government. In other words, it is suggested that the trade unions' decisions were influenced

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1. Ibid.: 1943, December 1945; Credentials List for the Special Conference of the L.P., Johannesburg, 10 November 1946. Cabinet 2 draw 3-49. L.P. Archives; Minutes of the Annual Conference of the L.P., 1940-1948, credentials lists, op.cit.
  2. The statement is based largely on the names of the L.P.'s rank and file and executive members. See the L.P. minutes and correspondence in the L.P. Archives.
  3. C.L. Henderson, General Secretary, L.P. to E.S. Sachs, General Secretary, G.W.U., 5 March 1942, op.cit.; Minutes of L.P.N.E.C. Meeting, 19 February 1942, op.cit.
  4. List of Unions and Branches of Unions Affiliated to the T. & L.C. as at 31 March 1950, op.cit.

TABLE VI

TRADE UNION/TRADE UNION BRANCH AFFILIATES OF  
THE SOUTH AFRICAN LABOUR PARTY : 1942-1954.<sup>1</sup>

TRADE UNION/TRADE UNION BRANCH	RACIAL COMPOSITION	APPROXIMATE PERIOD OF AFFILIATION	AFFILIATED MEMBERSHIP				
			EARLY 1943	1943- 1944	LATE 1945	LATE 1946	MID 1947
THE AMALGAMATED ENGINEERING UNION	MIXED	1943-1944		50			
THE JOHANNESBURG no. 1 BRANCH OF THE AMALGAMATED SOCIETY OF WOOD- WORKERS	only WHITES	LATE 1945- EARLY 1947			30	29	
THE CONCESSION STORES AND ALLIED TRADES ASSISTANTS' UNION	only WHITES	MID 1942- 1954	100		1000	1000	200
THE GARMENT WORKERS' UNION	MIXED	MID 1947- 1957					1000 1000
THE MOTOR INDUSTRY EMPLOYEES' UNION	MIXED	LATE 1942- MID 1951	500		500	500	
THE MOTOR TRANSPORT WORKERS' UNION (WITWATERSRAND AND PRETORIA)	only WHITES	MID 1942- EARLY 1947	50		25	25	
THE NATIONAL MILLING WORKERS' INDUSTRIAL UNION	Prob. only WHITES	MID 1942- EARLY 1947	50		50	50	
THE SOUTH AFRICAN CINEMATOGRAF OPERATORS' UNION	only WHITES	MID 1942- EARLY 1947	1000		1000	1000	
THE SOUTH AFRICAN THEATRE AND CINEMA EMPLOYEES' UNION	MIXED	EARLY 1945- Dec. 1946			1000	1000	
THE WITWATERSRAND LIQUOR AND CATERING TRADE EMPLOYEES' UNION	MIXED	MID 1942- EARLY 1947	50		50	50	

1. L.P. Branch Membership Figures for 1943. Cabinet 2 draw 3-37. L.P. Archives; L.P. Branch Membership Figures for December 1945. Cabinet 2 draw 3-42. L.P. Archives; Credentials List for the Special Conference of the L.P., Johannesburg, 10 November 1946. Cabinet 2 draw 3-49. L.P. Archives; Minutes of the Annual Conference of the L.P., 1942-1954, credentials lists and names of branches in the minutes generally, op.cit.; Minutes of L.P.N.E.C. Meeting, 21 May 1942, 18 June 1942, 11 January 1945, 13 December 1946, 4 February 1947, 13 August 1951, op.cit.; B.M. Touyz, op.cit., pp. 211, 218; S. Mann, Chairman, A.E.U., ... to General Secretary, L.P. (June 1943). Cover ABE-4. L.P. Archives; E.A. Clements, Secretary, A.E.U. to C.L. Henderson, General Secretary, L.P., 29 November 1943. Cover ABE-4, op.cit.; H.C. Ackerman, Acting General Secretary, L.P., to Secretary, A.E.U., 26 September 1944. Cover ABE-4, op.cit.; Annexure D, in T. & L.C.N.E.C. Memorandum Submitted to the Industrial Legislation Commission by the T. & L.C., Johannesburg, December 1948, op.cit.



by the consideration that the L.P. was well placed to make representations to the wartime administration on behalf of its affiliates. It will be recalled that the T. & L.C. was absorbed into the wartime administration and the decisions of a number of Pretoria-based trade unions to affiliate to the Council during the war years were probably also influenced by similar considerations.<sup>1</sup>

The U.P. government's Asiatic Land Tenure and Indian Representation Bill of 1946 precipitated a crisis in the L.P.'s parliamentary caucus which rebounded into the Party's structures.<sup>2</sup> It will be noted from Table VI that two-thirds of the L.P.'s trade union/trade union branch affiliates withdrew from the Party in late 1946/early 1947. In addition, the bulk of the L.P.'s constituency branches became defunct during 1947 and 1948.<sup>3</sup>

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1. For information on the affiliation of Pretoria-based trade unions to the T. & L.C. see p. 206 above.
  2. See p. 280 below.
  3. I was unable to find any constituency branch lists for 1947 and 1948 and the statement is based on a general impression of the L.P. minutes for the period.

B. System of Government, the Leadership  
and the Balance of Power in the Party

The L.P.'s system of government has been discussed in the previous chapter. It will be recalled that the annual conference was the final arbiter of the L.P.'s affairs and that all resolutions at the conference were decided either by means of a show of hands or - if demanded by a delegate - by a block vote. However, all the elections at the conference were determined by means of a block vote.<sup>1</sup>

A constituency branch's/trade union's block vote was equivalent to its affiliated membership.<sup>2</sup> The trade union affiliates accounted for a solid majority of the L.P.'s affiliated membership from late 1942 and were therefore in a position to dominate the Party.<sup>3</sup> The L.P. Archives contain few records of how the trade union affiliates voted on conference resolutions and in elections. An analysis of the ballot papers for the December 1945 and the December 1946 L.P.n.e.c. elections show that the election results would not have been markedly different if the ballots had been restricted to the constituency branches.<sup>4</sup>

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1. See p. 254 above.

2. See p. 254 above.

3. L.P. Branch Membership Figures: 1943, December 1945, op.cit.; Credentials List for the Special Conference of the L.P., Johannesburg, 10 November 1946, op.cit.

4. The ballot cards for the 1945 and 1946 n.e.c. elections are found in the files of the conference minutes. See Minutes of the Annual Conference of the L.P. : Johannesburg, 29, 30 December 1945; Durban, 28, 29 December 1946, op.cit.

While it is difficult to identify the constituent members of the nebulous blocs at the L.P. conferences, the Party's trade union affiliates can be classified in accordance with the way they voted at the T. & L.C. conferences. Thus, the bulk of the L.P.'s affiliates (i.e., the Concession Stores and Allied Trades Assistants' Union, the G.W.U., the Motor Industry Employees' Union, the Motor Transport Workers' Union (Witwatersrand and Pretoria), the National Milling Workers' Industrial Union and the Witwatersrand Liquor and Catering Trade Employees' Union) leaned in favour of the 'left-wing' bloc of T. & L.C. affiliates, while the A.E.U., the South African Cinematograph Operators' Union and the South African Theatre and Cinema Employees' Union supported the 'centre-right' bloc.<sup>1</sup> It will be noted from Table VI that the trade unions which supported the 'centre-right' bloc accounted for a majority of the L.P.'s trade union affiliated membership until the beginning of 1947.<sup>2</sup>

A small number of Afrikaners served on the L.P.n.e.c. during the 1940's. The L.P.n.e.c. was dominated by members from the nebulous 'centre-right' section of the Party during the first half of the 1940's. However, the 'left-wing' of the L.P. steadily tightened its grip on the L.P.n.e.c. during the second half of the decade.<sup>3</sup>

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1. Minutes of the Annual Conference of the T. & L.C., 1939-1948, op.cit.  
For further information on some of the trade union/trade union branch affiliates: G.W.U. pp. 92-110, 244-245, 251, 264 above; Witwatersrand Liquor and Catering Trade Employees' Union, pp. 45-46 above; A.E.U., p. 48 Table I, and p. 273 Table VI; Johannesburg no. 1 branch of the A.S.W., pp. 135, 273 Table VI; and the Motor Industry Employees' Union and the Concession Stores and Allied Trades Assistants' Union p. 185 footnote 2 above.
  2. It must be noted when reading Table VI that the Concession Stores and Allied Trades Assistants' Union increased its affiliated membership to one thousand in October 1945. Minutes of L.P.N.E.C. Meeting, 18 October 1945, op.cit.
  3. The statements are based on a general examination of the L.P.'s conference and n.e.c. minutes for the period.

## C. Some Policy Considerations

### 1. Economic Policy

The socialist objective remained embodied in the constitution and the L.P.'s commitment to the establishment of a "democratic Socialist Commonwealth" was reaffirmed in the L.P.'s Post-War and War Policy which was adopted at the annual conference of the Party in December 1941.<sup>1</sup>

The L.P. conferences during the 1940's passed resolutions which called for considerable intervention in the economy by the state. Thus, for example, the L.P. conferences called for the establishment of a state bank which would 'own and control all the country's finance, credit and currency'.<sup>2</sup>

The L.P. M.P.'s propagated the establishment of a state bank in parliament.<sup>3</sup>

The L.P. conferences during the decade also called for improved social-welfare and industrial legislation. Thus, for example, the conferences called for greater state assistance for the miners who had contracted phthisis and for the introduction of a comprehensive insurance scheme against, inter alia, unemployment and sickness.<sup>4</sup>

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1. L.P. Post-War and War Policy. Annexure, in Minutes of the Annual Conference of the L.P., Johannesburg, 27, 28 December 1941, op.cit.; Constitution of the L.P., dated December 1945, sec. 3. Cabinet 2 draw 1. L.P. Archives.

2. Minutes of the Annual Conference of the L.P., 1940-1948, op.cit.  
The L.P. had advocated the establishment of a state bank in one form or another since at least the early 1920's.

3. Hansard, Assembly Debates, vol. 56, 5 March 1946, col. 2927.

4. Minutes of the Annual Conference of the L.P., 1940-1948, op.cit.

The L.P. failed to obtain any significant concessions for the workers during the war years.<sup>1</sup> However, it will be recalled that the wartime administration generally consulted the T. & L.C. when it drafted the various social-welfare and industrial bills; and that a few minor suggestions by the T. & L.C. were incorporated into the bills.<sup>2</sup> In addition, W. Madeley (who, as we have seen, served as the Minister of Labour between 1939 and 1945) provided various forms of assistance to the trade union movement. Thus, for example, in late 1940 he persuaded the Department of Justice to withdraw charges against members of the Tailoring Workers' Industrial Union who had been involved in an industrial dispute;<sup>3</sup> and in 1944 he refused to register a Western Cape trade union for the distributive trade on the ground that it was a "company union".<sup>4</sup>

White female workers in the Transvaal displayed considerable militancy during the war years and the period witnessed strikes by, inter alia, white female tobacco workers, sweet workers and shop assistants.<sup>5</sup> Madeley was seriously embarrassed by the

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1. See the T. & L.C. and L.P. Archives for the period generally; R.H. Davies, *Capital, State and White Labour in S.A. 1900-1960*, op.cit., p. 297.

2. See pp. 190-191 above.

3. Minutes of the Annual Conference of the T. & L.C., Durban, 14, 15, 16, 17, 18 April 1941, p. 80, op.cit.

4. E.J. Burford, National Secretary, N.U.D.W. to General Secretary, L.P., 21 December 1944. Cover 22.3. L.P. Archives.

A "company union" was either controlled by or under the strong influence of the employer(s).

5. Minutes of T. & L.C.N.E.C. Meeting, 24 September 1940, 1 October 1940, 29 September 1942, op.cit.; Minutes of T. & L.C.N.E.C. Special Meeting, 17 October 1940, op.cit.; N. Herd, op.cit., pp. 95-96, 114-130. The G.W.U. assisted in the establishment of the Transvaal-based Tobacco Workers' Union and the national Sweet Workers' Union and the G.W.U. enjoyed considerable influence in the two unions' affairs during the first half of the 1940's. Indeed, a prominent member of the G.W.U.'s cadre served as the part-time general secretary of the Tobacco Workers' Union until the close of the 1940's. See the Tobacco Workers' Union Archives generally; B.M. Touyz, op.cit., pp. 188-190.

brutal conduct of the police during a number of the strikes. Thus, for example, the annual conference of the L.P. in December 1940 censured the coalition government for the brutal conduct of the police who, among other things, used tear gas and batons in their attempt to break the 1940 strike of white female tobacco workers in Rustenburg.<sup>1</sup>

## 2. Colour Policy

The L.P. failed to review its colour policy during the war years. The L.P. conferences during the first half of the 1940's passed resolutions which called for blacks to be incorporated into the Industrial Conciliation Act's machinery.<sup>2</sup> While lack of material makes it difficult to give an accurate account of the parliamentary L.P.'s stand on the issue, it would appear that during the early 1940's the Party's parliamentary caucus supported the incorporation of blacks into the Industrial Conciliation Act's machinery and that W. Madeley lobbied the coalition government over the question.<sup>3</sup> However, it is clear that by early 1944 the parliamentary L.P. was deeply divided over the question of blacks being incorporated into the Act's machinery. Consequently, the L.P.n.e.c. and

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1. Minutes of the Annual Conference of the L.P., Johannesburg, 28, 29 December 1940, op.cit. Rustenburg is a town in the Western Transvaal.
  2. Minutes of the Annual Conference of the L.P., 1940-1945, op.cit.
  3. Minutes of T. & L.C.N.E.C. Meeting, 12 May 1942, 12 October 1943, 2 November 1943, 21 December 1943, op.cit.

the Party's parliamentary caucus were reluctant to take a stand on the issue during the last years of the Second World War.<sup>1</sup>

Serious tensions arose in the L.P. and the U.P. in early 1946 over Smuts's Asiatic Land Tenure and Indian Representation Bill. The L.P.'s parliamentary caucus supported the section of the Bill which imposed various forms of segregation on the Indian community. However, the L.P.'s parliamentary caucus split right down the middle over the section of the Bill which granted the Indians from the northern provinces token indirect representation in parliament.<sup>2</sup> M.J. Van den Berg and W. Madeley resigned from the L.P.: Van den Berg immediately joined the N.P. while Madeley later established an ephemeral labour party with an anti-Indian bias after it had become clear that his supporters were unable to gain control of the L.P. machine.<sup>3</sup> The resignation of three other M.P.'s from the L.P. (i.e., J.R. Sullivan, D. Burnside and the Rev. Miles Cadman) during the first half or so of 1947 reflected the general disarray in the Party.<sup>4</sup>

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1. Minutes of L.P. Parliamentary Caucus Meeting, 15 February 1944, 21 March 1944. Cover 25.4. L.P. Archives; Minutes of L.P.N.E.C. Meeting, 4 May 1944, op.cit.
  2. Minutes of L.P. Parliamentary Caucus Meeting, 26 March 1946 (afternoon session), 12 April 1946, 13 April 1946, 16 April 1946, op.cit. For information on the Indians' voting rights in the Cape see p. 1 footnote 2 above.
  3. Minutes of L.P.N.E.C. Meeting, 1946-1947, op.cit.; Minutes of a Joint Meeting between L.P.N.E.C. and the L.P. Parliamentary Caucus, 28 April 1946, 4 August 1946. Minutebooks, etc., no. 27. L.P. Archives; Minutes of the Special Conference of the L.P., Johannesburg, 10 November 1946. Minutebooks, etc., no. 25. L.P. Archives.
  4. Cape Times, 23 January 1947, 7 March 1947, 1 July 1947. J.R. Sullivan was elected to parliament as an independent in the 1943 general election. Sullivan, who represented a Durban constituency, joined the L.P. in 1945. Minutes of L.P.N.E.C. Meeting, 24 August 1945, op.cit.; Cape Times, 1 July 1947.

The L.P.n.e.c. and the Party's Transvaal provincial council caucus supported the Asiatic Land Tenure and Indian Representation Bill. The N.P. moved a motion in the Transvaal provincial council in early 1946 which expressed "great concern" over the proposal to grant political rights to Indians in the northern provinces. The U.P. M.P.C.'s, who comprised an overwhelming majority in the council, declined to support either the N.P. motion or a L.P. amendment which endorsed the U.P. government's Indian bill. The council finally adopted a U.P. amendment which, although ambiguously worded, amounted to a motion of no confidence in the Smuts government.<sup>1</sup>

The L.P.'s colour policy was revised at a specially convened conference in November 1946. The conference adopted a programme which rejected the L.P.'s long-standing policy of complete separation between white and black. In terms of the programme the "Native" areas would be developed in order to curb the flow of migrant workers and urbanisation in general. The programme advocated a policy of equal pay for equal work and defended the existing colour bar in industry on the ground that it was in reality a cheap labour bar. It also called for blacks to be incorporated into the Industrial Conciliation Act's machinery; and reaffirmed the L.P.'s support for social and residential segregation. The contemporary

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1. Minutes of L.P.N.E.C. Meeting, 9 March 1946, op.cit.; Votes and Proceedings of the Transvaal Provincial Council, vol. XXIX, 24 April 1946, pp. 31-32.



method of indirect representation of blacks in parliament was endorsed and in a cautiously worded section Smuts's Indian act was approved. After the adoption of the programme a motion was successfully moved that the L.P. convene a conference with the other parliamentary parties to formulate a common non-white policy.<sup>1</sup> The other parliamentary parties would, however, have nothing to do with the idea.<sup>2</sup>

D. Elections during the 1940's and the  
Party's Relations with the Wartime  
Coalition Government

The L.P.n.e.c.'s decision of 5 September 1939 to allow W. Madeley to serve in the wartime coalition cabinet was endorsed by the annual conference of the L.P. in December 1939.<sup>3</sup> Many of the L.P.'s left-leaning members were bitterly opposed to South Africa's participation in an 'imperialist' war and to the L.P.'s participation in the coalition government. Thus, for example, H. Watts, a member

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1. L.P. Non-European Policy as Adopted by the Special Conference, 10 November 1946. T.U.C.S.A. Archives, DD 12.20; Minutes of the Special Conference of the L.P., Johannesburg, 10 November 1946. Minutebooks, etc., no 25, op.cit.
  2. B.M. Touyz, op.cit., p. 208.
  3. Minutes of L.P.N.E.C. Special Meeting, 5 September 1939, op.cit.; Minutes of the Annual Conference of the L.P., Johannesburg, 30, 31 December 1939, op.cit.

of the L.P.'s Transvaal provincial executive, resigned from the L.P. at the beginning of 1940 and subsequently joined the C.P.<sup>1</sup>

It will be remembered that the G.W.U. assisted in the establishment of the Sweet Workers' Union (S.W.U.) and that the G.W.U. enjoyed considerable influence in the S.W.U.'s affairs.<sup>2</sup> The G.W.U. was dissatisfied with W. Madeley's handling of a Wage Board Recommendation for the sweet workers and at the beginning of 1940 the Union established a Trade Union Council of Action to campaign against the unsatisfactory Wage Board and for a decent minimum wage for all workers.<sup>3</sup>

The Berea-Yeoville branch of the L.P., which had approximately forty-eight members in early 1940, advocated a softer colour policy than the official Party line. The chairman of the branch was E.J. Burford, a member of the L.P.'s Transvaal provincial executive and the national secretary of the S.W.U. The branch supported the Trade Union Council of Action; and its newsletter, Advance, implicitly opposed South Africa's participation in an 'imperialist' war and also implicitly criticised

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1. Minutes of L.P.N.E.C. Meeting, 8 January 1940, op.cit.; Minutes of L.P.T.P.E. Meeting, 6 February 1940, op.cit.; H.J. Simons and R.E. Simons, op.cit., p. 547. H. Watts won a ward on a C.P. ticket in a Johannesburg city council election in 1944/1945. According to a contemporary L.P. activist I interviewed the ward was in a middle class area. Watts was the only member of the C.P. to win a Johannesburg city council seat during the thirties and forties.
  2. See p. 278 footnote 5 above.
  3. For a detailed discussion of the Trade Union Council of Action and the Wage Board Recommendation for the sweet workers see B.M. Touyz, op.cit., pp. 180-191.

Madeley for his conduct in regard to the Wage Board Recommendation for the sweet workers.<sup>1</sup>

The L.P.n.e.c. resolved in June 1940 to dissolve the Berea-Yeoville branch and to expel the branch's members from the L.P.<sup>2</sup> The small Von Brandis branch unsuccessfully pressed the annual conference of the L.P. in December 1940 to appoint a commission to inquire into the Berea-Yeoville branch's dissolution.<sup>3</sup>

There is no evidence in the L.P. Archives that any of the Party's Afrikaner-dominated branches agitated against the Party's war policy.<sup>4</sup> This seems to suggest that many Afrikaner members who opposed South Africa's participation in the war on Britain's side simply withdrew from the L.P. during the early 1940's.

It would appear that the leftists in the L.P. came out in full support of the war effort after Hitler's invasion of the Soviet Union in 1941.<sup>5</sup> A relatively small number of

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1. L.P. Branch Membership Figures for 1940. Cabinet 2 draw 3-34. L.P. Archives; Minutes of L.P.T.P.E. Meeting, 6 February 1940, op.cit.; Memorandum Submitted by the L.P. General Secretary (n.d.). Cover 2-3. L.P. Archives; Report of the Sub-Committee Appointed by the N.E.C. to Inquire into Certain Alleged Improper Propaganda within the Party (n.d.). Annexure, in Minutes of the Annual Conference of the L.P., Johannesburg, 28, 29 December 1940, op.cit.; Advance, January 1940. G.W.U. Archives.  
Berea and Yeoville are suburbs in the heart of Johannesburg.
  2. Minutes of L.P.N.E.C. Meeting, 20 June 1940, op.cit.
  3. Minutes of the Annual Conference of the L.P., Johannesburg, 28, 29 December 1940, op.cit.
  4. See the L.P. Archives for the period.
  5. The statement is based on the general conduct of leftists in the trade union movement and on the absence of any recorded anti-war propaganda or agitation in the L.P. Archives.

the L.P.'s constituency branches remained opposed to the L.P.'s participation in the wartime coalition government largely on the ground that the government's economic policy was incompatible with the L.P.'s socialist goals. A resolution approving the L.P.'s continued participation in the wartime coalition government was carried on a block vote by 1 641 votes to 271 at the annual conference of the Party in January 1943.<sup>1</sup>

The coalition government postponed the provincial council elections which were scheduled for late 1941. Thus, with the exception of a number of by-elections, the mid-1943 general election and the October 1943 provincial council elections were the first tests of the country's support for the coalition government's war policy. The coalition government appreciated the need to avoid a split in the pro-war vote and after numerous discussions the L.P. and the U.P. negotiators concluded an electoral pact for the general election and the Transvaal provincial council election. The seats allocated to the L.P. in terms of the electoral pact gave the Party a real chance of roughly doubling its representation in parliament and the Transvaal provincial council.<sup>2</sup> However, a number of the L.P.'s constituency branches were opposed to the principle of the L.P.

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1. Minutes of the Annual Conference of the L.P., Johannesburg, 2, 3 January 1943, op.cit.
  2. Minutes of L.P.N.E.C. Special Meeting, 21 March 1943, op.cit., H.B. Kruger, op.cit., pp. 143-147; B.M. Schoeman, op.cit., pp. 251-271.

concluding an electoral pact with a capitalist party.<sup>1</sup> A motion endorsing the electoral pact was carried on a block vote by 2 131 votes to 1 016 at a special L.P. conference in April 1943.<sup>2</sup>

The L.P.'s Transvaal provincial executive was reluctant to accept the special conference's decision and continued its agitation against the electoral pact with the U.P. in the provincial council election.<sup>3</sup> The tensions in the L.P. came to a head when the L.P.n.e.c. resolved by ten votes to eight to reject the nomination of J. McPherson as the Party's parliamentary candidate in the South Rand constituency.<sup>4</sup> McPherson (who was a member of the L.P.n.e.c. and a prominent supporter of the Party's nebulous 'left-wing' section) had been nominated by all three L.P. branches in the constituency.<sup>5</sup>

A meeting of L.P. "progressives" was held in Johannesburg at the close of May 1943. The meeting resolved by thirty-three votes to eight to secede from the L.P. and to establish the Militant Democratic Party. Although McPherson was a leading figure in the breakaway move, she almost immediately returned to the L.P. fold. The Militant Democratic Party failed to

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1. e.g., R. Szur, Secretary, Berea Branch, L.P. to Secretary, L.P. N.E.C., 10 March 1943. Cabinet 2 draw 3-37. L.P. Archives.
  2. Minutes of the Special Conference of the L.P., Johannesburg, 11 April 1943. Minutebooks, etc., no. 25, op.cit.
  3. Minutes of L.P.T.P.E. Meeting, 30 March 1943, 27 April 1943, 25 May 1943, op.cit.
  4. Minutes of L.P.N.E.C. Special Meeting, 18 May 1943, op.cit.
  5. Minutes of L.P. Bezuidenhout Valley Branch Meeting, 4 June 1943. Minutebooks, etc., no. 10. L.P. Archives; Minutes of the Annual Conference of the L.P., Johannesburg, 2, 3 January 1943, op.cit.  
For information on J. McPherson see p. 291 below.

contest any elections and in September 1943 the Party amalgamated with the G.W.U.'s Independent Labour Party (I.L.P.) to form the Socialist Party (S.P.). Senator H. Basner, who represented blacks in parliament, became one of the S.P.'s two vice-presidents. The S.P. was routed in the February 1944 Johannesburg municipal election and subsequently faded from the scene.<sup>1</sup>

The inaugural conference of the G.W.U.'s I.L.P. was held in Johannesburg on 1 May 1943. The conference adopted a draft programme and resolved to contest three Witwatersrand seats in the forthcoming general election. While the programme stressed that the introduction of socialism was the ultimate goal of the Party, it advocated a reformist package of improved social-welfare and industrial measures as an interim policy. Thus, for example, the programme laid down minimum wage rates and conditions of employment; and called for the end to profiteering, the supremacy of the rule of law and for progressive industrial development. Although the programme contained no references to the colour question, it is clear that the Party advocated a white supremacist policy.<sup>2</sup>

The L.P. emphasised in its election campaign that the freedom of the workers and indeed mankind was dependent on victory over the Axis powers.<sup>3</sup> While the C.P. and the I.L.P. were

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1. B.M. Touyz, *op.cit.*, pp. 203-205; Minutes of L.P.N.E.C. Meeting, 15 July 1943, *op.cit.*
  2. For a detailed discussion on the I.L.P. see B.M. Touyz, *op.cit.*, pp. 192-205.
  3. B.M. Touyz, *op.cit.*, p. 204.

heavily defeated in all the seats they contested in the general election, the L.P. was successful in the nine parliamentary seats (six Witwatersrand, two Natal and one Cape) it was allocated in terms of the electoral pact with the U.P. The L.P. M.P.'s on the Witwatersrand were D. Burnside in Fordsburg; J. Christie in South Rand; H.J. Cilliers (the vice-president of the M.W.U.) in Mayfair; W. Madeley in Benoni; A.C. Payne (the chairman of the Transvaal district committee of the A.E.U.) in Germiston; and M.J. Van den Berg in Krugersdorp.<sup>1</sup> The U.P. won eighty-nine seats in the general election, the Dominion Party seven and the N.P. forty-three (nineteen Cape, thirteen Orange Free State and eleven Transvaal).<sup>2</sup> It will be noted from Table VII that the N.P. won two seats in the Pretoria area and one on the Witwatersrand. Although the U.P. secured a solid majority in the general election, Smuts retained the Dominion Party and L.P. representatives in his cabinet.

The L.P.-U.P. alliance also achieved a resounding victory in the Transvaal provincial council election. The U.P. won forty-three seats, the L.P. twelve and the N.P. nine. The L.P. M.P.C.'s, who all represented Witwatersrand constituencies, included three lawyers (H. Davidoff, J. Duthie

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1. Kenneth A. Heard, General Elections in South Africa 1943-1970, p. 17; B.M. Schoeman, *op.cit.*, pp. 251-271; A.E.U.M.R., May 1943; The Labour Bulletin, June 1943. For information on the following M.P.'s see: D. Burnside, pp. 266-267, 280 above; J. Christie, pp. 247-248, 262-263 above and 295 below; H.J. Cilliers, p. 269 above; W. Madeley, pp. 246-248, 262, 266-267, 269-270, 278-280, 282-284 above and 291, 295 footnote 4 below; and M.J. Van den Berg, pp. 262, 266-269, 280 above.
  2. It must be noted that the Dominion Party did not contest any seats in the Transvaal. For footnote and text see B.M. Schoeman, *op.cit.*, pp. 270-271.

TABLE VII

THE 1943 AND THE 1948 GENERAL ELECTIONS :  
SELECTED ELECTION RESULTS FROM THE TRANSVAAL.<sup>1</sup>

N.P. - A.P. ELECTION RESULTS	1943 GENERAL ELECTION						1948 GENERAL ELECTION	
	SEATS CONTESTED		PERCENTAGE OF VOTES CAST		SEATS WON		SEATS CONTESTED	SEATS WON
	N.P.	A.P.	N.P.	A.P.	N.P.	A.P.	N.P. / A.P.	N.P. / A.P.
WITWATERSRAND, EXCLUDING JOHAN- NESBURG AREA			35,1	,1	0	0		6
JOHANNESBURG AREA			18,2	,6	1	0		2
PRETORIA AREA			38,4	,9	2	0		5
TOTAL TRANSVAAL	54	10	34,3	,9	11	0	50	36

L.P. - U.P. ELECTION RESULTS	1943 GENERAL ELECTION						1948 GENERAL ELECTION	
	SEATS CONTESTED		PERCENTAGE OF VOTES CAST		SEATS WON		SEATS CONTESTED	SEATS WON
	L.P./U.P.	L.P./U.P.	L.P./U.P.	L.P./U.P.	L.P./U.P.	L.P./U.P.	L.P./U.P.	L.P./U.P.
WITWATERSRAND, EXCLUDING JOHAN- NESBURG AREA			63,3		15			11
JOHANNESBURG AREA			74,4		17			16
PRETORIA AREA			59,3		6			3
TOTAL TRANSVAAL	59		60,5		53		60	30

Note (1). "Seats contested" include unopposed seats.

1. B.M. Schoeman, op.cit., pp. 271, 302; K.A. Heard, op.cit., pp. 21-23, 39-41.



and D. Epstein), three businessmen (R. Feldman, A. Hepple and R.R. Moore) and one relatively prominent trade unionist, J.J. Maritz (the Afrikaner lay president of the Motor Transport Workers' Union (Witwatersrand and Pretoria)).<sup>1</sup> The Transvaal provincial government consisted of an administrator and a four member strong executive committee. J. Duthie was appointed a member of the executive committee.<sup>2</sup>

The L.P. had not published an official organ since the 1920's.<sup>3</sup> An official journal of the L.P., The Labour Bulletin, appeared during the course of 1943 and in mid-1945 the Party purchased a small Vereeniging newspaper, The Vereeniging Recorder. The newspaper had supported the L.P. during the first half of the 1940's. The two L.P. organs became defunct in the months following the Party's debacle over Smuts's Indian bill of 1946.<sup>4</sup>

The Transvaal provincial council, which was dominated by the Smuts faction of the U.P., resolved in June 1940 to suspend all municipal elections in the Transvaal and the first municipal

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1. H.B. Kruger, op.cit., pp. 143-148; L.P. The Candidates Who's Who (n.d.), op.cit.
  2. Votes and Proceedings of the Transvaal Provincial Council, vol. XXVII, 1943-1944, p. iv.
  3. e.g., the Durban-based New Guardian which was published during the 1920's. The labour weekly, Forward, was owned by a former L.P. activist, G. Weinstock, for much, if not all, of the 1930's and 1940's. While the Forward generally supported the L.P., it was never the official organ of the Party.
  4. The Vereeniging Recorder, 1942-1946; The Labour Bulletin, 1943-1947; Minutes of L.P.N.E.C. Meeting, 21 June 1945, op.cit.; Minutes of L.P.N.E.C. Special Meeting, 29 August 1946. Vereeniging is a town in the Southern Transvaal.

elections in the province were held in February 1944.<sup>1</sup> The municipal elections in the province were generally held on a staggered basis and the L.P. put up a credible performance in the various Johannesburg municipal council elections during 1944 and 1945. Thus, for example, the L.P. won seven out of the twelve wards in the February 1944 Johannesburg municipal council election.<sup>2</sup>

The L.P.n.e.c. issued a statement shortly before the Johannesburg municipal council election in October 1945 that W. Madeley was to withdraw from the cabinet.<sup>3</sup> The L.P. won five wards in the municipal election and increased its representation in the council by two. The L.P., which had a total of eighteen seats, took shaky control of the forty-two member council. J. McPherson was elected mayor.<sup>4</sup>

The L.P.'s debacle over Smuts's Indian bill and the Party's revised colour policy alienated erstwhile supporters and left the Party machine in a badly shaken state. Allegations of "communist" influences in the L.P. were made with increasing intensity and reached a zenith in the months prior to the mid-1948 general election.<sup>5</sup> The L.P.'s demise is best reflected

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1. Votes and Proceedings of the Transvaal Provincial Council : vol. XXIII, 12 June 1940, pp. 249-251, 18 June 1940, p. 269, 19 June 1940, pp. 279-280, 20 June 1940, pp. 289-290; vol. XXV, 20 May 1942, pp. 27-28; vol. XXVI, 19 May 1943, pp. 43-44.
  2. Minutes of U.P.C.E.C. Meeting, 2 March 1944. U.P. Archives.
  3. H.J. Simons and R.E. Simons, op.cit., p. 549.
  4. Illustrated Bulletin, 7 November 1945, 14 November 1945.
  5. Cape Times, 7 March 1947, 3 November 1947; See Forward generally for the period, e.g., 27 February 1948, 25 March 1948, 7 May 1948.

in its dismal performances in Johannesburg municipal council elections after early 1946.<sup>1</sup>

The weakened L.P. favoured an electoral pact with the U.P. for the mid-1948 general election. Indeed, there is evidence that the L.P. took steps to facilitate the conclusion of an electoral pact with the U.P. The L.P.'s endeavours to facilitate an electoral pact with the U.P. is reflected in the following extract from a letter written in December 1947 by A. Hepple to his fellow L.P. M.P.C., R. Feldman, in regard to the L.P.'s annual conference in January 1948:

... I shall not be a candidate [for the Party chairmanship] and Reg [Smith] will be allowed a clear field. It would appear that Solly Sachs [the general secretary of the G.W.U.] was afraid that I was too left to occupy the chair at this stage in the party's affairs and considers that a "moderate" man like Reg would go down better with the public. In addition he would not like it to be thought that the Garment Workers' Union was choosing the chairman.

... I was assured that if I went forward I would be fully supported by Sachs, Rehm [C. Rehm, the president of the Motor Industry Employees' Union], Bennie [B. Weinbren, the general secretary of the Concession Stores and Allied Trades Assistants' Union] and several

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1. Forward, 7 November 1947; Cape Times, 22 September 1949; L.P.N.E.C. Report to the Annual Conference, April 1949. Minutebooks, etc., no. 25, op.cit.

others. However, even a simpleton such as I could quickly discern that everyone is so anxious to have a pact with the U.P. in 1948 that they want to make sure that everything is Kosher in advance, and think that the election of Reg as chairman will be the tip-off to the U.P.]

The U.P. appreciated that the N.P. had a good chance of winning several Witwatersrand constituencies in the general election. U.P. leaders on the Witwatersrand argued that an electoral alliance with the L.P. would prevent a split in the anti-N.P. vote and would help to soften the U.P.'s (capitalist) image.<sup>2</sup> The L.P. and the U.P. duly concluded an electoral pact for the general election.<sup>3</sup>

A few of the L.P.'s former trade union affiliates remained sympathetic to the Party's cause and, for example, in early 1948 the A.E.U. and the South African Cinematograph Operators' Union donated one hundred pounds and fifteen pounds respectively to the Party's election fund.<sup>4</sup> The L.P. focused its election campaign upon the need to prevent the N.P. from being elected to office.<sup>5</sup>

The N.P.'s election manifesto and the various factors which influenced the outcome of the election have been discussed

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1. (A. Hepple) to R. Feldman, 31 December 1947. L.P. Archives.
  2. Minutes of U.P. Witwatersrand E.C. Meeting, 16 February 1948, 12 March 1948. U.P. Archives.
  3. N.M. Stultz, op.cit., p. 135; Cape Times, 17 March 1948.
  4. Minutes of L.P.N.E.C. Meeting, 29 April 1948, op.cit.
  5. R.H. Davies, Capital, State and White Labour in S.A. 1900-1960, op.cit., p. 321.

elsewhere in the thesis and will not be repeated here.<sup>1</sup>

However, it should be noted that the post-war years were marked, *inter alia*, by food shortages and that the U.P. government essentially failed to come to grips with the need to introduce new social-welfare legislation.<sup>2</sup> Real white wages (for adult males) rose by an average of about 5 per cent over the years 1945-1948. However, according to Davies, "after the relative fall of the war years [the wage increase] was at a rate rather less than many white wage-earners were demanding".<sup>3</sup>

The N.P./A.P. alliance secured a small majority in the general election - albeit with a minority of the votes. The N.P. won seventy seats, the A.P. nine, the U.P. sixty-five and the L.P. six.<sup>4</sup> There were also three M.P.'s who represented the blacks. The Indians had rejected Smuts's Indian act and no M.P.'s had been elected to represent them in parliament (the Indians from the northern provinces were entitled to elect three M.P.'s).<sup>5</sup>

The N.P./A.P. alliance won thirty-six seats in the Transvaal, twenty-eight in the Cape, twelve in the Orange Free State and

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1. For short summaries see pp. 308-310, 320 below.

2. R.H. Davies, *Capital, State and White Labour in S.A. 1900-1960*, op.cit., pp. 316-317; See also pp. 195-196 above.

3. R.H. Davies, *Capital, State and White Labour in S.A. 1900-1960*; op.cit., p. 311.

4. B.M. Schoeman, op.cit., pp. 300-302.

5. K.A. Heard, op.cit., pp. 31, 38.

three in Natal.<sup>1</sup> Approximately two-thirds of the N.P./A.P. alliance's new seats were in the rural areas of the Cape and the Transvaal. The U.P. more or less held its own in the urban areas, the major exceptions being the Witwatersrand and Pretoria.<sup>2</sup> It will be noted from Table VII that the N.P. won one Witwatersrand and two Pretoria seat(s) in the 1943 general election and that the N.P./A.P. alliance won eight Witwatersrand and five Pretoria seats in the 1948 general election. Thus, the N.P./A.P. alliance would not have secured victory in the 1948 general election without the support of a considerable proportion of the Afrikaner workers in the urban areas of the Transvaal. The A.P. merged into the N.P. in October 1951.<sup>3</sup>

The L.P. won four seats on the Witwatersrand and two in Natal in the 1948 general election. The L.P. M.P.'s on the Witwatersrand were J. Christie in Johannesburg City, H. Davidoff in Edenvale, A. Hepple in Rosettenville and Dr. T. Osborn in Benoni.<sup>4</sup> Not one of the L.P.'s six M.P.'s was an active/retired trade unionist.<sup>5</sup>

The negotiations between the L.P. and the U.P. for an electoral pact for the March 1949 Transvaal provincial council election collapsed at the close of 1948 after the U.P. had

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1. B.M. Schoeman, *op.cit.*, p. 300.

2. *Ibid.*, pp. 270, 300; K.A. Heard, *op.cit.*, pp. 38-39.

3. Ben Schoeman, My Lewe in die Politiek, p. 188.

4. B.M. Schoeman, *op.cit.*, pp. 282-300. It should be noted that W. Madeley died towards the close of 1947.

5. For information on the following M.P.'s see: H. Davidoff, pp. 288, above, and 302, 304 below; and A. Hepple, pp. 288, 290, 292-293 above and 302, 304 below.

indicated that it would refuse to honour a proposed electoral pact in any constituency where the L.P. nominated "communist dubbed" candidates.<sup>1</sup> The L.P. proved unable to muster a team of candidates for the Transvaal provincial council election and the Party nominated only two candidates to contest the election. Although no electoral pact had been concluded, the U.P. did not nominate candidates to oppose the L.P. in the two constituencies. The L.P.'s two candidates, D. Epstein and R. Feldman, were returned to the Transvaal provincial council in the election.<sup>2</sup>

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1. Minutes of L.P.N.E.C. Special Meeting, 5 December 1948, 9 December 1948, op.cit.

2. H.B. Kruger, op.cit., pp. 149-153. For information on the two M.P.C.'s see pp. 264, 288, 290, 292 above.

## CHAPTER XII

THE CONTINUED DECLINE OF THE SOUTH  
AFRICAN LABOUR PARTY : 1948-1954A. Membership Characteristics, System  
of Government and the Leadership

While I was unable to find any membership lists it is clear that the L.P. had relatively few constituency branch members between 1948 and 1954. Thus, for example, delegates from ten constituency branches attended the January 1952 L.P. conference in Johannesburg. The ten branches, which were all from the Witwatersrand, were affiliated to the L.P. on a total membership of 336.<sup>1</sup>

It will be noted from Table VI that three trade unions were affiliated to the L.P. during the last years of the 1940's and that the Motor Industry Employees' Union disaffiliated from the Party in mid-1951. While the G.W.U. remained affiliated to the L.P. on a membership of one thousand during the period under review in the chapter, it would appear that the Concession Stores and Allied Trades Assistants' Union reduced its affiliated membership from one thousand to two hundred in mid-1948.<sup>2</sup>

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1. L.P. Branches at the Conference and Their Affiliated Memberships. Annexure, in Minutes of the Annual Conference of the L.P., Johannesburg, 5, 6 January 1952, op.cit.
  2. Minutes of the Annual Conference of the Transvaal L.P., Johannesburg, 28, 29 August 1948. Cover 33-10. L.P. Archives.  
Table VI is at p. 273.



The block vote was modified in 1948 and in terms of the new formula the affiliated trade unions were to hold a maximum of half the block vote at the L.P. conferences.<sup>1</sup> The block vote had caused a limited degree of discontent among the constituency branches during the 1940's;<sup>2</sup> and a number of Party members remained opposed to the new formula. Thus, for example, Dr. B. Wilson resigned from the L.P. in January 1952 in protest against the fact that the two remaining trade union affiliates held half the total block vote at the L.P. conferences.<sup>3</sup>

The G.W.U. never had more than two or three Union members on the L.P.n.e.c. E.S. Sachs served as an ordinary member of the L.P.n.e.c. between January 1948 and January 1951 and as Party treasurer between January 1951 and mid-1952.<sup>4</sup> It will be remembered that Sachs was listed in terms of the Suppression of Communism Act in mid-1952.<sup>5</sup>

Few Afrikaners served on the L.P.n.e.c. between 1948 and 1954.<sup>6</sup> The L.P.n.e.c. remained firmly under the control of the 'left-wing' of the Party during the period under

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1. L.P. Constitutional Amendments and Addenda Adopted Since 1945. Cabinet 2 draw 1, op.cit.
  2. Minutes of L.P. Bezuidenhout Valley Branch Meeting, 3 September 1942, 3 December 1942, 6 October 1943, op.cit.; Minutes of the Annual Conference of the L.P., Durban, 28, 29 December 1946, op.cit.
  3. Minutes of the Annual Conference of the L.P., Johannesburg, 5, 6 January 1952, op.cit.; Cape Times, 7 January 1952.
  4. See the election results in Minutes of the Annual Conference of the L.P., 1948-1952, op.cit.; The Garment Worker/Die Klerewerker, January/February 1951, January/February 1952.
  5. See p. 108 above.
  6. The statement is based on the names of the L.P.n.e.c. members. See the election results in Minutes of the Annual Conference of the L.P., 1948-1954, op.cit., and see Minutes of L.P.N.E.C. Meeting, 1951-1952, op.cit.

review in the chapter. Indeed, it would appear that most of the members of the nebulous 'centre-right' section of the L.P. had withdrawn from the Party by the beginning of the 1950's.<sup>1</sup>

#### B. Some Policy Considerations

The L.P. moved haltingly towards a softer colour policy during the period under review in the chapter. Thus, for example, the annual conference of the L.P. in January 1953 adopted a new franchise policy which basically envisaged the extension to the other provinces of the limited right of Cape blacks to elect parliamentary representatives. In addition, the Cape Coloured franchise would be extended to the Transvaal, the Orange Free State and to the Coloured community in Natal. The Indians in Natal would be placed on a communal roll and would be entitled to elect three M.P.'s and two senators. It will be recalled that in terms of the Cape Coloured franchise Indian and Coloured males who possessed certain qualifications were placed on the common voters roll. The January 1953 L.P. conference also called for blacks to be incorporated into the Industrial Conciliation Act's machinery.<sup>2</sup>

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1. The statements are based on a general impression of the L.P. Archives and especially on (1) Minutes of the Annual Conference of the L.P., 1948-1954, op.cit., and (2) Minutes of L.P.N.E.C. Meeting, 1948-1954, op.cit.
  2. Minutes of the Annual Conference of the L.P., Johannesburg, 10, 11 January 1953, op.cit.; Non-European Policy of the L.P. (n.d.). G.W.U. Archives, EBA 3-2.

The L.P. conferences between 1948 and 1954 paid little attention to the Party's economic policy. While the socialist objective remained embodied in the constitution, the L.P. conferences considered few, if any, resolutions which called for the nationalisation of industries, etc. The L.P. conferences passed resolutions which called upon the N.P. government, inter alia, to come to grips with the rising cost of living and to introduce improved social-welfare measures such as better maternity benefits for industrial workers.<sup>1</sup>

The L.P. conferences consistently condemned the N.P. government for its repressive legislation and for its assault on the trade union movement. The L.P. conferences also expressed their opposition to the N.P. government's attempts to violate the constitution in an endeavour to remove the Cape Coloureds and Indians from the common voters roll.<sup>2</sup>

In contrast to the parliamentary U.P., the L.P. M.P.'s vigorously opposed all the N.P. government's repressive legislation such as the Suppression of Communism Act and the Public Safety Act.<sup>3</sup> The parliamentary L.P. also took a firm stand against the N.P. government's attempts to

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1. Minutes of the Annual Conference of the L.P., 1948-1954, op.cit.

2. Ibid.

3. Hansard, Assembly Debates, e.g.: vol. 73, 14 June 1950, cols. 8967-8984, 15 June 1950, cols. 9181-9183; vol. 76, 29 May 1951, cols. 8045-8052, 4 June 1951, cols. 8496-8505, 8536-8539, 11 June 1951, cols. 9138-9139; vol. 81, 21 January 1953, cols. 66-67, 11 February 1953, cols. 1016-1035, 16 February 1953, cols. 1273-1274.

violate the constitution.<sup>1</sup> However, the L.P. M.P.'s were reluctant to oppose the N.P. government's 'social' legislation such as the Group Areas Act and the Separate Amenities Act.<sup>2</sup>

C. Elections during the 1950's

The L.P. performed dismally in elections during the 1950's. All seventeen L.P. candidates were defeated in the Johannesburg municipal council election in late 1951 and the Party's meagre representation in the council was eliminated.<sup>3</sup>

The annual conference of the L.P. in January 1953 resolved to support the United Front.<sup>4</sup> The United Front, which comprised the U.P., the L.P. and the War Veterans Torch Commando, was formed with the objective of ousting the N.P. government in the 1953 general election. The L.P. and the U.P. concluded an electoral pact for the general election.<sup>5</sup>

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1. Ibid., e.g.: vol. 75, 16 April 1951, col. 4501, 18/19 April 1951, cols. 5059-5060, 30 April 1951, cols. 5710-5711, 15 May 1951, cols. 6656-6657; vol. 78, 22 April 1952, cols. 4136-4140, 7/8 May 1952, col. 5329, 9 May 1952, cols. 5515-5516; vol. 79, 15 May 1952, cols. 5908-5911.
  2. Ibid., e.g.: vol. 73, 31 May 1950, cols. 7775-7776, 1 June 1950, cols. 7828-7829; vol. 80, 24 June 1952, cols. 9249-9250, 9300; vol. 82, 21 August 1953, col. 2081, 24 August 1953, col. 2165, 4 September 1953, cols. 2865-2869, 2896-2897.
  3. Minutes of L.P.N.E.C. Meeting, 7 November 1951, op.cit., Cape Times, 2 November 1951.
  4. Minutes of the Annual Conference of the L.P., Johannesburg, 10, 11 January 1953, op.cit.
  5. For the text and for information on the Torch Commando see K.A. Heard, op.cit., pp. 51-53.

The L.P.'s general election manifesto warned the electorate that the N.P. administration proposed to shackle the trade union movement and was poised for an assault on the constitution (i.e., the Cape Coloured franchise). The manifesto reaffirmed the L.P.'s support for residential and social segregation; and stated that the L.P. believed that blacks could be given opportunities to improve their lot without endangering the position of the skilled white workers. The manifesto also advocated improved social-welfare measures. Thus, for example, the manifesto called for the "adequate subsidisation of foodstuffs" and for "rent control over all dwellings".<sup>1</sup>

The N.P. won ninety-four seats in the general election of 1953, the U.P. fifty-seven and the L.P. four. The N.P. won forty-three seats in the Transvaal, thirty in the Cape, thirteen in the Orange Free State, two in Natal and six in South West Africa (included for the first time in the general election).<sup>2</sup> It will be noted from Tables VII and VIII that the N.P. won a further five seats on the Witwatersrand and an additional seat in the Pretoria area.<sup>3</sup>

The L.P. won two seats on the Witwatersrand and two in Natal in the general election. The election in the Johannesburg City constituency was postponed due to the death of a candidate. The L.P., which had been allocated the constituency

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1. L.P. Manifesto. Parliamentary Elections, 15 April 1953. Free S.A. from Fear! Free S.A. from Want! Defend Democracy. Minutebooks, etc., no. 8. L.P. Archives.
  2. B.M. Schoeman, op.cit., p. 333.
  3. Table VII is at p. 289 and Table VIII is below.

TABLE VIII

THE 1953 GENERAL ELECTION : SELECTED  
ELECTION RESULTS FROM THE TRANSVAAL.<sup>1</sup>

N.P. ELECTION RESULTS	SEATS CONTESTED	PERCENTAGE OF VOTES CAST	SEATS WON
	N.P.	N.P.	N.P.
WITWATERSRAND, EXCLUDING JOHANNESBURG AREA		47,7	10
JOHANNESBURG AREA		31,1	3
PRETORIA AREA		54	6
TOTAL TRANSVAAL	58	50,9	43

L.P. - U.P. ELECTION RESULTS	SEATS CONTESTED	PERCENTAGE OF VOTES CAST	SEATS WON
	L.P./U.P.	L.P./U.P.	L.P./U.P.
WITWATERSRAND, EXCLUDING JOHANNESBURG AREA		51,6	8
JOHANNESBURG AREA		66,9	14
PRETORIA AREA		45,4	2
TOTAL TRANSVAAL	58	48,1	24

Note (1). The election statistics exclude the  
Johannesburg City constituency.

(2). "Seats contested" include unopposed seats.

1. B.M. Schoeman, op.cit., pp. 333-334; K.A. Heard, op.cit., pp. 60, 62-63.

in terms of the electoral pact with the U.P., won the by-election and increased its representation in parliament to five. The L.P.'s Witwatersrand M.P.'s were H. Davidoff in Johannesburg City, A. Hepple in Rosettenville and L. Lovell (a lawyer) in Benoni.<sup>1</sup>

The L.P. was defeated in both seats it contested in the August 1954 Transvaal provincial council election.<sup>2</sup> The two seats the L.P. contested in the 1958 general election were on the Witwatersrand. The U.P. defeated the L.P. in both constituencies.<sup>3</sup> The L.P. was dissolved in the early 1960's.

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1. B.M. Schoeman, *op.cit.*, pp. 316-333, 345.

2. H.B. Kruger, *op.cit.*, pp. 156-160.

3. B.M. Schoeman, *op.cit.*, pp. 347, 360, 365-366.

## CHAPTER XIII

CONCLUDING REMARKS  
OF  
PART TWO OF THE THESIS

Our review of the L.P. and the T. & L.C. has highlighted the lack of unity between the two organisations during the 1930's. This disunity, which reflected serious policy differences between the L.P. and the T. & L.C., naturally weakened the 'social democratic' movement's activities during the decade. Nevertheless, the L.P. generally put up a credible performance in elections in the Transvaal and the T. & L.C. engaged in a number of activities in defence of the workers' civil rights. In sum, although the T. & L.C. appeared to lean in favour of the U.P. on occasion, it can be stated that the 'social democratic' movement propagated and defended an ideological platform which differed from that of the other political parties and movements in the country.

Things were very different during the 1940's and the first half of the 1950's. The L.P. and the T. & L.C. were absorbed into the wartime administration and they focused their attention on prosecuting the war to a successful conclusion. The two organisations, which enjoyed a fairly close relationship, failed to oppose the various wartime regulations which curtailed the



rights of the workers and also failed to obtain any major economic concessions for the workers.

The 'social democratic' movement remained in alliance - albeit a looser alliance - with the U.P. during the second half of the 1940's and the first half of the 1950's. The alliance was exemplified by the L.P.'s electoral pacts with the U.P. in the 1948 and 1953 general elections and by the T. & L.C.'s appeals to the workers during the early 1950's to oust the N.P. government in the 1953 general election. The objective condition for the alliance was, of course, the fact that in contrast to the N.P. the U.P. supported the traditional collective bargaining machinery and trade union structures.

The L.P. and the T. & L.C. thus largely abandoned the struggle to win the workers to an independent 'social democratic' banner after the outbreak of World War II. Although the 'left-wing' of the L.P. and the T. & L.C. gained control of their respective organisations during the second half of the 1940's they proved unable and/or unwilling to reverse their organisations' policies and their ascension to power served merely to hasten the two organisations' disintegration.

But there was more. In contrast to its activities during the 1930's, the T. & L.C. essentially failed during the 1940's and the first half of the 1950's either to mobilise opposition to the growing threat of christian-national trade unionism or

to engage in any campaigns or litigation in defence of the civil rights of the workers. The one notable exception was the P. & D.T. & L.C. which engaged in a fairly vigorous struggle before succumbing to the Afrikaner nationalists' onslaught during the second half of the 1940's. In short, the L.P.'s and the T. & L.C.'s policies and activities - or, for that matter, lack of activities - after the outbreak of World War II facilitated the endeavours of the christian-national trade unionists and the N.P. to mobilise support among the Afrikaner workers.

In addition, it must be remembered that English-speaking immigrant workers had originally established the trade union movement in South Africa and that the L.P. and the T. & L.C. essentially remained under the domination of English-speaking workers during the period under review. The L.P. and the T. & L.C. were vulnerable to the broad ideological assault of the Afrikaner nationalists on the labour movement.

The L.P. struggled during the 1930's to adapt its policies to meet the aspirations of its Afrikaner supporters and accordingly contributed to the erosion of its Afrikaner support base. The evidence examined in our section on the L.P. suggests that the Party's limited revival on the Witwatersrand during the 1930's was largely the result of NEWLY FOUND Afrikaner support. If our analysis is correct then it would help to explain the apparent paradox between the L.P.'s tiny membership and its election performances in the Transvaal during the decade. The evidence also suggests that the L.P.'s Afrikaner support base

dwindled rapidly from the close of the 1930's and that the Party drew its dwindling support from the mid-1940's essentially from the English-speaking workers.

The Voortrekker centenary celebration of 1938 and the Afrikaner nationalists' trade union campaigns during the thirties and forties weaned many Afrikaners from ideologies of class and won them to the cause of 'Afrikanerdom'. The mystic appeal of Afrikaner nationalism and the N.P.'s racist labour policy attracted many Afrikaner workers to the Party's banner.

The L.P.'s participation in the pro-war coalition government and its electoral pact with the U.P. in the 1943 general election eroded the Party's Afrikaner support base. The L.P.'s alliance with the U.P. on the war issue emphasised the L.P.'s British 'connection' and compromised the Party's socialist objective and policy. With the abandonment of its independent ideological platform the L.P. had little to offer the Afrikaner workers and numerous former Afrikaner supporters of the Party who still supported the policy of conciliation and/or the war effort probably turned directly to the U.P.

The U.P. government failed to improve the economic position of important strata of the Afrikaner workers during the crucial post-war years and this factor undoubtedly contributed to the L.P./U.P. alliance's defeat in the 1948 general election. Thus, for example, the U.P. government failed to come to grips with the need for new social-welfare legislation and the Afrikaner miners viewed the L.P. and the U.P. as supporters

of the M.W.U. leadership which displayed little interest in the welfare of its members. The section of Smuts's Asiatic Land Tenure and Indian Representation Act of 1946 which proposed to grant Indians in the northern provinces token indirect representation in parliament probably also alienated Afrikaners from the L.P./U.P. alliance.

Our examination of the L.P. indicates that the Party drew a considerable proportion of its support from the manual workers and the miners who were essentially employed as supervisors of black labour. The proportion of the economically active white population which was employed as manual workers decreased significantly from the mid-1940's. Furthermore, the dwindling number of white manual workers was becoming increasingly Afrikaans in character. Finally, it will be recalled that the proportion of the Anglophone electorate in the urban constituencies of the Transvaal - the L.P.'s traditional stronghold - steadily declined during the period under review in the study. Thus, with its Afrikaner support base in tatters, the L.P.'s prospects in the post-war years were very bleak.

The war years witnessed a substantial increase in the L.P.'s English-speaking support base and the Party APPEARED to consolidate its position. Thus, for example, we saw that the L.P.'s membership increased considerably and that the Party performed well in Johannesburg city council elections. Furthermore, the L.P./U.P. alliance won resounding victories in the mid-1943 general election and the October 1943 Transvaal provincial council election.

Yet the L.P.'s participation in the wartime coalition government and its electoral pact with the U.P. in the 1943 general election served to strengthen the principal division in white politics (i.e., Afrikaner nationalism versus conciliation) and it was increasingly unlikely that the L.P. would be able to hold on to its English-speaking supporters if it sought to challenge the U.P. in elections in general and at the parliamentary level in particular. The growing strength of the N.P. and the L.P.'s debacle over Smuts's Indian act of 1946 increased the tendency for English-speaking workers to look directly to the U.P. to neutralise the threat of the N.P.

The rapid decline in the L.P.'s popularity in the post-war years was partly veiled by the Party's electoral pacts with the U.P. in the 1948 and 1953 general elections. The L.P.'s meagre support in the Transvaal during the first half of the 1950's was reflected by the fact that the Party was defeated in all the seats it contested in both the 1951 Johannesburg municipal council election and the 1954 Transvaal provincial council election. It is submitted that the effective demise of the L.P. should be dated at the close of the 1940's rather than sometime during the 1950's or even the early 1960's.

The position was similar in the T. & L.C. A number of trade unions with large white memberships such as the B.W.I.U., the G.W.U., the J.M.T.W.U. and the N.U.D.W. remained affiliated to the T. & L.C. until the Council's dissolution in late 1954. However, it is clear that the bulk of the white members of these trade unions did not support the T. & L.C. during the

last years of the Council's existence. These trade unions remained affiliated to the T. & L.C. largely through the insistence of their popular and long-serving 'social democratic'/left-leaning leaders. We saw that J.J. Venter kept the J.M.T.W.U. affiliated to the T. & L.C. from the close of the 1940's by the sheer force of his influence in the Union notwithstanding considerable opposition among the general membership over the Union's continued linkage to the T. & L.C.

Thus, while trade unions with large white memberships remained affiliated to the T. & L.C. until its dissolution, it was a different matter altogether for the T. & L.C. to persuade its affiliates' white members - many of whom were Afrikaners - ACTIVELY to support a campaign against christian-national trade unionism or the N.P. government's assault on the labour movement - e.g., the Suppression of Communism Act. The T. & L.C. would probably have been able to mobilise its affiliates' white members if the N.P. government had attempted to implement its proposal virtually to destroy the trade union movement. However, the N.P. government studiously refrained from doing this.

## CHAPTER XIV

## CONCLUSION

We explained in the concluding sections of the two parts of the thesis, firstly, why the Afrikaner nationalists achieved limited success in their attempts to gain control of individual trade unions. It was argued that the membership characteristics and the systems of government of trade unions are crucial variables in any analysis of the Afrikaner nationalists' successes and failures in the individual trade unions. And secondly, we showed that the L.P. and the T. & L.C. largely failed during the 1940's and the first half of the 1950's to act as a bulwark against the Afrikaner nationalists' assault on the labour movement. It was argued that the L.P.'s Afrikaner support base dwindled rapidly from the close of the 1930's and that the Party drew its dwindling support from the mid-1940's essentially from the English-speaking workers.

Numerous authors have focused attention on the question why the white and non-white workers failed to form a united front over the years. Thus, for example, a number of authors have attempted to explain why the job colour bar became entrenched in the mining industry;<sup>1</sup> and Marxist authors such as H. Simson

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1. e.g.: R.H. Davies; Capital, State and White Labour in S.A. 1900-1960, op.cit., passim; Frederick A. Johnstone, Class, Race and Gold : A Study of Class Relations and Racial Discrimination in South Africa.

and H. Wolpe have examined the nature of the white workers' occupations (e.g., the question whether the white workers were manual workers or supervisors of black labour).<sup>1</sup>

Our review of the 'social democratic' movement in the Transvaal between 1930 and 1954 concentrated on the divisions within the white community and simply took the white workers' support for the white supremacist system in the country as a self-evident factor. However, this is not to suggest that the question of the emergence of racial prejudice, etc., need not be analysed or explained. Rather, our analysis was based on the assumption that, whatever the cause of its origins, the white supremacist society had become firmly entrenched by 1930 and that racial prejudice, etc., among the white workers had over the years acquired an autonomy of its own.

The 'social democratic' movement's colour policy was permeated with inconsistencies and contradictions. Very broadly, it can be stated that the movement advocated unity among ALL workers at the industrial level, but that it supported the white supremacist system at the political level. Many of the white-dominated trade unions admitted non-whites (i.e., Coloureds and Indians) as members and they were generally eligible to vote in union elections, etc.

The T. & L.C.'s constitution contained no colour bar and black, Coloured and Indian delegates attended the Council's conferences over the years. With the exception of the dispute in the P. & D.T. & L.C. there was very little opposition to the admission of black trade unions to the T. & L.C. prior to the annual conference

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1. Howard Simson, "The Myth of the White Working Class in South Africa", in African Review, vol. 4 no. 2, 1974, pp. 189-203; Harold Wolpe, "The 'White Working Class' in South Africa", in Economy and Society, vol. 5 no. 2, May 1976, pp. 197-240.



of the Council in early 1947. Numerous white trade union leaders (who included communists and L.P. activists) embraced the principle that all workers irrespective of colour should be united at the industrial level and viewed the T. & L.C. as the representative of all the workers in South Africa.<sup>1</sup>

Other white trade union leaders supported the admission of black trade unions to the T. & L.C. largely on the ground that it provided a means to control them.<sup>2</sup> This strategy is partly reflected in the following extract from the statement made by C.H. Crompton, the general secretary of the I.M.S., to his executive council in late April 1947. Crompton explained to his executive council why the Society's delegates to the recent T. & L.C. conference had voted against the South African Iron, Steel and Kindred Trades Association's motion which had called for black trade unions to be excluded from the Council:

The Secretary advised ... that he could not accept this policy [of the South African Iron, Steel and Kindred Trades Association] as we were affected and went further to say that the Electrical Workers and the A.E.U. were even more greatly affected than ourselves ....

The Government policy and the Capitalist press were openly advocating the removal of the industrial colour bar but implied that they did not want the removal of the social colour bar.... They were introducing into the industry the Non-European and

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1. Minutes of the Annual Conference of the T. & L.C., 1941-1954, op.cit.
  2. Ibid

native at increasing numbers and Engineering Operative Grades were taking on natives in fairly large numbers ....

The [Pretoria trade union] group were pursuing a policy of segregation .... This policy must lead to the reduction of the standard of living enjoyed by the Skilled Craftsman or the Operative Semi-skilled man in the Industry, as [black trade unions] pursuing their own policy would accept - what to the European would be a lowering of the standard of living - whereas to themselves would be a definite increasing of their present standard of living and thus the view of the [Pretoria] Group ... could not be accepted by the Mechanics' Union whose crafts and jobs were not protected by the Law in the Country, such as the [statutory job colour bars in the mining industry].<sup>1</sup>

The N.P. won the 1948 general election on a platform which included a call for a job reservation and quota system to protect the white workers. Consequently, the need for the white-dominated trade unions to consider establishing links with the black workers and trade unions was reduced. An increasing number of the T. & L.C.'s affiliates gradually began to lean in favour of the exclusion of black trade unions from the Council.<sup>2</sup> It is noteworthy that C.H. Crompton supported a motion at the 1950 T. & L.C. conference which called for black trade unions to be excluded from the Council.<sup>3</sup>

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1. Minutes of I.M.S.E.C. Meeting, 24/27 April 1947, op.cit.

2. Minutes of the Annual Conference of the T. & L.C., 1948-1954, op.cit.

3. Ibid., Durban, 18, 19, 20, 21 April 1950, pp. 46-49.

The L.P. advocated a policy of complete separation between white and black for much of the period under review. L.P. ideologues made a number of weak attempts over the years to show that the Party's colour policy was not inconsistent with the Party's objective of a socialist economy. Thus, for example, the L.P.'s memorandum on its "Native policy" declared in 1933 that

It may be said that we, as a Socialist Party, are putting forward a policy that is incompatible with Socialism. Local conditions, however, must be considered in every country which desires to establish a Socialist State, as has been proved in countries where experiments on a large scale have been and are being conducted. There is no reason why even under Socialism there should be association between Natives and Europeans, which some think is an essential consequence of Socialism, nor is there anything incompatible with Socialism if the Natives are permitted to progress in their own States in their own environment.

Providing we assist the Native races on generous and well thought-out lines we are entitled to say that they can and will progress and uplift themselves in their own territories, whilst the Europeans are organising and building themselves into a sound White race in their own areas.<sup>1</sup>

With the exception of the Turffontein branch of the A.S.W. which was affiliated to the L.P. during the early 1930's,

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1. Memorandum on the Native Policy of the Party, Submitted by the National Executive. Annexure, in Minutes of the Annual Conference of the L.P., Johannesburg, 31 December 1932, 1 January 1933, op.cit.

no trade union/trade union branch was affiliated to the Party during the first decade after the Party's reunification in mid-1931. A number of trade unions affiliated to the L.P. during the war years.

The L.P.'s debacle over Smuts's Indian act of 1946 and the Party's revised colour policy which was adopted at a special conference of the Party in late 1946 caused a great deal of controversy and placed the trade union affiliates of the Party in an invidious position. Thus, for instance, W. Goldberg (of the exclusively white South African Cinematograph Operators' Union) informed his colleagues at a L.P.N.E.C. meeting in July 1946 that he opposed the proposal to convene a special conference to review the Party's colour policy:

Comrade Goldberg, in speaking as a Trade Unionist, said that this question had placed his Union, a National one, in an awkward position. That section of the Union in the Cape were in favour of the Non-Europeans, whilst the sections in the rest of South Africa were definitely against them. Therefore, ... the holding of a Special Conference will have the direct cause of the cessation of our affiliation.<sup>1</sup>

There can be little doubt that the controversy over the L.P.'s new - and relatively soft - colour policy contributed to the decision of the bulk of the Party's trade union/trade union

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1. Minutes of L.P.N.E.C. Meeting, 23 July 1946, op.cit.

branch affiliates to withdraw from the Party in the months following the special conference in late 1946.

While further research is necessary it is probable that the L.P.'s trade union affiliates which had non-white members voted in favour of the Party's new colour policy at the special conference. The G.W.U. affiliated to the L.P. in 1947 and remained affiliated to the Party until 1957 when it was forced to disaffiliate from the Party in terms of the Industrial Conciliation Act of 1956.<sup>1</sup> The G.W.U. helped to steer the L.P. into gradually adopting a softer colour policy over the years.<sup>2</sup> It is worth noting that the non-white delegates (Coloureds, Indians and black females) at the G.W.U.'s national conference in August 1953 opposed a motion moved by an Afrikaner nationalist-controlled branch which called for the Union to disaffiliate from the L.P.<sup>3</sup> (It will be recalled that the G.W.U. enfranchised its non-white members in 1953.)

The point we are trying to make is that one cannot simply explain/analyse the white labour movement in terms of economic factors and the nature of the white workers' occupations. One must also review the membership characteristics, structures, etc., of the individual trade unions, the L.P. and the T. & L.C. if one is to understand the ideology and policy of the 'social democratic' movement. We also stated

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1. B.M. Touyz, *op.cit.*, p. 218.

2. See the L.P. Archives for the period generally.

3. Minutes of the National Council of the G.W.U., Johannesburg, 7, 8 August 1953, pp. 22-24, 28-35. G.W.U. Archives, BAC 1.

that the 'social democratic' movement's colour policy was permeated with inconsistencies and contradictions.

The inconsistencies and contradictions in the 'social democratic' movement's colour policy made the movement vulnerable to the activities of the Afrikaner nationalists. On the one hand, the 'social democratic' movement's support for a white supremacist system at the political level facilitated the Afrikaner nationalists' appeals to the Afrikaner workers for a further division among the workers - i.e., this time among the white workers on ethnic lines. On the other hand, the Afrikaner nationalists were also able to exploit the 'social democratic' movement's support for unity among all workers irrespective of colour at the industrial level and the L.P.'s failure to adopt a racist labour policy equivalent to that of the N.P.

Our study of the 'social democratic' movement in the Transvaal showed that the white labour movement constituted a major battleground in the Afrikaner nationalists' endeavours to mobilise the Afrikaner workers behind their banner. To ignore this aspect of the struggle (e.g., as virtually all the Afrikaans literature has tended to do), is to create a false sociopolitical environment in which the struggle for the support of the Afrikaner workers took place. The Afrikaans literature has tended to overemphasise ethnic solidarity at the expense of class factors in its analysis of the rise

of the present-day N.P.<sup>1</sup> This study has attempted to show that both class and ethnic factors played important roles in mobilising the Afrikaner workers behind the N.P.'s banner.

The 1938 Voortrekker centenary celebrations helped to strengthen Afrikaner nationalist sentiment among the workers and the split in the U.P. in 1939 over the war issue heralded the end of the political experiment of 'fusion'. The 'social democratic' movement was incorporated into the wartime coalition government and the Afrikaner nationalists constituted the only real opposition in the white political forum to the incumbent administration. It was against this background that the Afrikaner nationalists, who manipulated real or imagined economic/racial grievances among the workers, began to consolidate their position among the Afrikaner workers in the Transvaal. This trend was reflected in the trade union movement in the Transvaal and Afrikaner nationalist sympathisers won organising post elections, and gained control of a number of trade unions and numerous trade union branches.

English-speaking workers traditionally formed the backbone of the 'social democratic' movement in the Transvaal. With the white manual workers becoming increasingly Afrikaans in character, the future prospects of the 'social democratic' movement - particularly from the mid-1940's - was dependent on the support of a considerable proportion of the Afrikaner workers.

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1. See the Selected Bibliography for examples of the Afrikaans literature.

The relatively small number of Afrikaner trade union leaders who emerged during the 1930's often embraced either a nebulous 'social democratic' or Marxist ideology; and usually supported the principle of unity among all white workers irrespective of ethnicity or religion. A number of these Afrikaner trade union leaders joined the existing workers' organisations such as the L.P..

The 1940's witnessed an increase in the number of Afrikaner trade union leaders. However, with one or two exceptions, the Afrikaner trade union leaders did not join either the C.P. or the L.P. and they began to withdraw their unions from the T. & L.C. after the defeat of the motion at the 1947 T. & L.C. conference which had called for black trade unions to be excluded from the Council. The Afrikaner trade unionists leaned increasingly in favour of Afrikaner nationalism and the K.R.S.A.V., which was formally established in 1948, was the only Afrikaner-dominated workers' organisation to emerge from within the trade union movement during the forties and fifties.

The prospect of a viable Afrikaner-dominated labour party - of whatever ideological character - emerging from within the trade union movement declined as the 1950's progressed. Davies produced statistics which showed that the proportion of the economically active white population in South Africa which can be roughly classified as manual workers decreased from 28,65 per cent in 1946 to 17,48 per cent in 1960. Davies also showed



that the white workers obtained significant wage increases during the 1950's and that they were largely satisfied with the N.P. administration.<sup>1</sup>

Davies ignored the fact that discontent existed among some strata of the white workers during the second half of the 1950's over the government's policy of decentralising industry in general to white areas bordering the black reserves. The employment of low-paid blacks in the border industries was viewed as a serious threat to the economic well-being of the white workers in the urban industries.

It will be recalled that J. Du Pisanie assisted the Afrikaner nationalists in their agitation against the G.W.U. leadership during the 1940's and that he won the Germiston seat for the N.P. in the 1948 general election. Du Pisanie, who considered that the government was taking insufficient steps to lessen the competitive thrust of the rural clothing factories vis-a-vis the Germiston industry, clashed with the N.P. leadership at the close of the 1950's over the decentralisation policy. Du Pisanie apparently retired from politics after it had become clear that he was unlikely to secure re-nomination as the N.P. candidate for the Germiston seat in the 1961 general election.<sup>2</sup>

A number of Afrikaner trade unionists such as J.A. Kruger (the assistant chief secretary of the South African Iron, Steel and Kindred Trades Association) and K. du Preez (the general secretary of the South African Engine Drivers' and Firemen's Associa-

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1. R.H. Davies, Capital, State and White Labour in S.A. 1900-1960, op.cit., pp. 352-353, 369-373 appendix 1.

2. B.M. Touyz, op.cit., p. 228.

tion) established the ephemeral Conservative Workers' Party shortly before the 1961 general election largely in protest against the government's decentralisation policy. The Party unsuccessfully contested four Witwatersrand seats in the 1961 general election.<sup>1</sup> With the exception of the Conservative Workers' Party, Afrikaner trade unionists do not appear to have made any serious attempt to establish an autonomous white labour party during the fifties, sixties and seventies.

A few Afrikaner trade unionists - most notably G.H. Beetge of the Pretoria-based White Building Workers' Union - joined the far-right Herstigste Nasionale Party (H.N.P.) which was established by a relatively small number of N.P. dissidents in 1969. The H.N.P., which was under the leadership of Dr. A. Hertzog, objected primarily to the N.P. leadership's acceptance (formally at least) of the idea of "one white nation" based on the equality of the two languages. Other grievances of the dissidents included the government's policy of establishing diplomatic relations with independent black states and its policy of selected immigration of whites.<sup>2</sup>

The H.N.P. performed dismally in elections during the 1970's and was unable to win either a parliamentary or a provincial council seat. It is not our intention to review the socio-economic and political history of South Africa during the sixties, seventies and the early eighties. However, it should be noted that considerable discontent surfaced among the white

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1. L. Salomon, *op.cit.*, pp. 166-167 footnote 131.

2. Ben Schoeman, *op.cit.*, pp. 323-326, 332-367; R.H. Davies, Capital, State and White Labour in S.A. 1900-1960, *op.cit.*, p. 354.

workers at the close of the 1970's over the N.P. government's moves to abolish the more overt forms of job colour bars and to allow black trade unions to obtain registration under the Industrial Conciliation Act. Certain strata of the white workers were concerned that their economic well-being could be undermined by the new policy and - echoing the perception of the garment workers during the 1940's - feared that their status in the society would be affected. This latter concern was reflected in an editorial in the South African Iron, Steel and Kindred Trades Association's journal in mid-1981:

The Government has stated that the era of racial discrimination is over. However, the government has failed to add that CLASS DISCRIMINATION INEVITABLY TAKES ITS PLACE .... The big and unpleasant question we have to ask ourselves is where we stand in the ladder of social classes. The unfortunate answer is ... that WE ARE MEMBERS OF THE WORKING CLASS .... We must not allow our spirit as White workers to be broken by a super capitalist system which could not even withstand the temptation to provoke us in the press and on television by showing us AND IN ADDITION THE WHOLE COUNTRY AND THE WORLD HOW EQUAL THE WORKING CLASS IS - whether white or black .... Instead of allowing this to break our spirit let us White workers rather now stand together.<sup>1</sup> [My translation. The emphases are in the original.]

The Afrikaner workers' dissatisfaction with the N.P. government's new labour policy contributed to the H.N.P.'s improved performance in the April 1981 general election. Although the H.N.P. considerably increased its share of the votes cast it still failed to win a seat in the general election.<sup>2</sup>

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1. Die Suid Afrikaanse Werker, June 1981.

2. Die Afrikaner, 22 May 1981.

## ABBREVIATIONS

A.B.	Afrikaner <u>Broederbond</u>
A.C.W.U.	African Cement Workers' Union
A.E.U.	Amalgamated Engineering Union
<u>A.E.U.M.R.</u>	<u>Amalgamated Engineering Union Monthly Report</u>
A.F.L.	Anti-Fascist League
A.P.	Afrikaner Party
A.S.W.	Amalgamated Society of Woodworkers
<u>A.S.W.M.R.</u>	<u>Amalgamated Society of Woodworkers Monthly Report.</u>
A.U. of B.T.W. of S.A.	Amalgamated Union of Building Trade Workers of South Africa.
b.e.c.	branch executive committee
B.K.K.	<u>Breë Kerklike Komitee</u>
B.U.J.E.	Building Unions' Joint Executives
B.W.B.B.	<u>Blanke Werkers se Beskermingsbond</u>
B.W.F.	<u>Blanke Werkers Federasie</u>
B.W.I.U.	Building Workers' Industrial Union
c.e.c.	central executive committee
C.P.	Communist Party
C.P.F.L.U.	Cape Province Federation of Labour Unions
e.c.	executive council/executive committee
F.A.K.	<u>Federasie van Afrikaanse Kultuurverenigings</u>
G.b.e.c.	Germiston branch executive committee of the Garment Workers' Union
G.C.	General Council
G.W.U.	Garment Workers' Union

H.N.P.	<u>Herstigte Nasionale Party</u>
I.C.U.	Industrial and Commercial Workers' Union
I.L.P.	Independent Labour Party
I.M.S.	Ironmoulders' Society
J.M.T.W.U.	Johannesburg Municipal Transport Workers' Union
K.R.S.A.V.	<u>Ko-ordinerende Raad van Suid Afrikaanse Vakverenigings</u>
L.P.	South African Labour Party
L.P.T.P.E.	Transvaal Provincial Executive of the South African Labour Party
M.P.C.	Member of the Provincial Council
M.W.U.	Mine Workers' Union
n.e.c.	national executive committee
N.P.	National Party
N.R.T.	<u>Nasionale Raad van Trustees</u>
N.U.D.W.	National Union of Distributive Workers
O.B.	<u>Ossewa-Brandwag</u>
O.F.S.	Orange Free State
P. & D.T. & L.C.	Pretoria and District Trades and Labour Committee of the South African Trades and Labour Council
R.D.B.	<u>Reddingsdaadbond</u>
S.A.	South Africa
S.A.C.T.U.	South African Congress of Trade Unions
S.A.M.E.U.	South African Mint Employees' Union
S.A.P.	South African Party
S.A.R.W.A.	South African Reduction Workers' Association
S.A.S.B.O.	South African Society of Bank Officials

S.A.T.U.	South African Typographical Union
<u>S.A.T.J.</u>	<u>South African Typographical Journal</u>
S.P.	Socialist Party
S.W.U.	Sweet Workers' Union
T. & L.C.	South African Trades and Labour Council
T. & L.C.S.T.L.C.	Southern Transvaal Local Committee of the South African Trades and Labour Council
T. & L.C.W.P.L.C.	Western Province Local Committee of the South African Trades and Labour Council
T.P.D.	Transvaal Provincial Division
T.U.C.	South African Trades Union Congress
T.U.C.S.A.	Trade Union Council of South Africa
U.P.	United Party
W.L.D.	Witwatersrand Local Division

## GLOSSARY OF AFRIKAANS WORDS

Afrikanerbond van Mynwerkers	League of Afrikaner Mine Workers
Afrikaner-Broederbond	Afrikaner Brotherhood
Ambag	Crafts
Arbeidslaer	Labour Front
Blanke Werkers Federasie	White Workers' Federation
Blanke Werkers se Beskermings- bond	White Workers' Protection League
boeresport	Afrikaner People's sport
Die Bouwerker	The Building Worker
Breë Kerklike Komitee	Joint Church Council
Ekonomiese Volkskongres	Afrikaner People's Economic Congress
Federale Volksbeleggings	Federal Volk's Investments
Federasie van Afrikaanse Kultuurverenigings	Federation of Afrikaans Cultural Associations
Gesuiwerde[Nationalist Party]	Purified Nationalist Party
Herenigde Nasionale of Volksparty	Reunited Nationalist or Afrikaner People's Party
Herstigte Nasionale Party	Reconstituted Nationalist Party
Hervormings Organisasie binne die Mynwerkersunie	Reform Organisation within the Mine Workers' Union
Kappie Kommando	Bonnet-Commando
Die Klerewerkersnuus	The Garment Workers' News

Ko-ordinerende Raad van Suid  
Afrikaanse Vakverenigings

Nasionale Raad van Trustees

Ossewa-Brandwag

Rebellie

Reddingsdaadbond

Die Republikein

Saamtrek

Spoorbond

Stormjaers

Volk

Volksbeweging

Volkskas

Zuid Afrikaanse Republiek

The Co-ordinating Council of  
South African Trades Unions

National Council of Trustees

Oxwagon-Sentinels

Rebellion

Rescue Action Society

The Republican

Pull Together

Railway League

Storm Troopers

Afrikaner People

Afrikaner People's Movement

Afrikaner People's Treasury

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